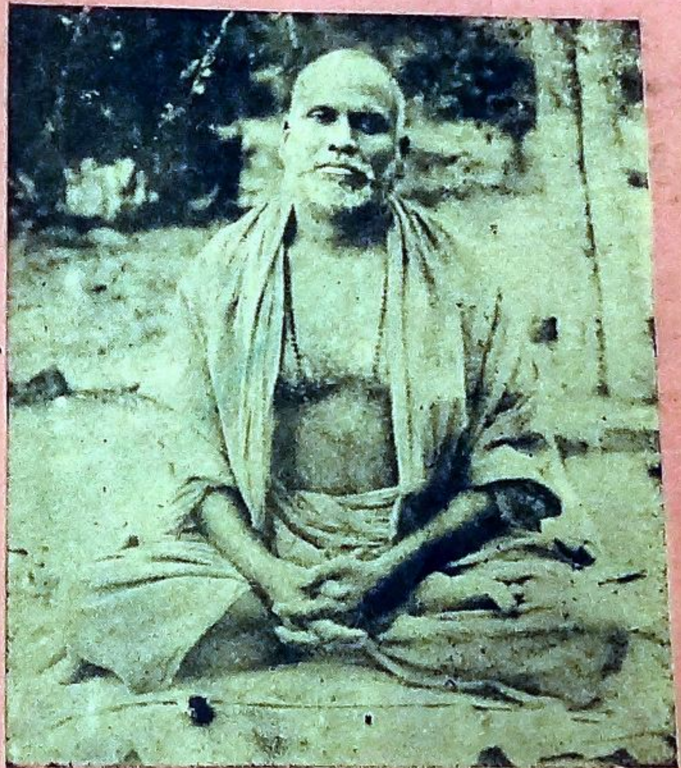
BIOGRAPHY

OF

Sadguru Maharshi MALAYALA SWAMI



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CONTENTS

			Page
Dedication			... v
Malayala Swami : An Appreciation – Swami Ranganathananda			... vii
Preface – V. Satyanarayana Murthy			... viii
Foreword – R. S. Sudarshanam			... xii
Chapter	1	Childhood	... 1
Chapter	2	Gurukula Study	... 9
Chapter	3	Gurukula Stay	... 12
Chapter	4	Pilgrimage	... 20
Chapter	5	Meditation	... 28
Chapter	6	Establishment of Sree Vyasasramu	... 47
Chapter	7	Propagation of Spiritual Education Tours and Meetings : Muvva Conference	... 63
Chapter	8	Mahasamadhi	... 85

DEDICATION

This book is printed in Memory of
Srimathi Addepalli Chittemma garu
by her family and offered to
Sri Sadguru Maharshi Malayala Swamivaru
on the occasion of Centenary Celebrations, 1985

MALAYALA SWAMI : AN APPRECIATION

By

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

President, Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad

In the modern spiritual history of Andhra Pradesh, the life and work of Malayala Swami of Yerpedu will form an important chapter. There is something unique in a spiritual teacher coming from away Malayalam-speaking state, Kerala, to our Telugu-speaking state, and inspiring through his life and teachings a few generations of men and women and children of this state. He preached a caste-less Hinduism and propagated specially the *Bhagavad-Gita* and its philosophy of Practical Vedanta. Perfect renunciation and pure love for all humanity marked the long life of this great Saint. It is inspiring to see the love and reverence that he commanded, and still commands after his physical passing away, from thousands of our people. This is the centenary year of this great spiritual teacher which is being celebrated by the Vyasasrama which he established in Yerpedu. His teachings are available to us in several publications in Telugu and English, as also his biography in English entitled "Biography of Malayala Swami" rendered by Smt. Vivecananda Devi from Telugu. (*Sri Malayala Swami Jeevita Charitra* by S. Lakshmaiah, published in 1983).

I join Sri Malayala Swami's thousands of devotees in paying my devoted homage to him on the occasion of his birth centenary.

Ramakrishna Math
Hyderabad

Swami Ranganathananda

PREFACE

Sadguru Sri Malayala Swami Varu brought about a great spiritual awakening among the people of our country. Andhra Pradesh benefited much from his manifold activities since the Vyasa Ashram established by him is located at Yerpedu near Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh. He mastered the Sanskrit language and acquired a thorough knowledge of all the Hindu Scriptures in Sanskrit. With the aim of making this knowledge of the scriptures available to the lay people he has written many treatises and published many religious books in Telugu, chief among them being "Yoga Vaasista".

Born in a small village in the district of Trichur in Kerala state, even as a child he was inclined towards self-introspection and meditation. Things of the mundane world did not have any fascination for him. He was determined to lead a spiritual life. He started his spiritual training under great teachers like Sri Siddha Guru Sivalinga and Sri Narayana Guru of Kerala. After a period of disciplined life and rigorous training under these Gurus he went out on pilgrimage and visited many religious centres throughout India from Kanya Kumari to Brahma Kapala. Later he performed meditation for twelve years in a cave not far away from the holy shrine of Sri Venkateswara on Tirumala Hills. He felt sorry for the various unethical customs that prevailed among the people in the name of religion. He decided that having attained self-realisation he should strive for the rest of his life to preach Sanatana Dharma and initiate people into spiritual life without any discrimination of caste and sex.

In the year 1926 Swamiji established the Vyasasramam at Yerpedu near Kalahasti. Since 1927 "Yadartha Bharathi", a monthly journal is published from this centre. This is dedicated for the dissemination of spiritual knowledge among its readers.

Sri Malayala Swami toured many parts of Andhra Pradesh and established Sanatana Dharma Samajams. He gave several discourses on the Gita and other Hindu scriptures, held religious

conferences and conducted Chaturmasya vratams at many places. Lots of people of both the sexes had religious succour from him. The volume of work turned out by him is something impossible for ordinary human beings. Vyasasramam is still a pilgrim centre for all his devotees in and outside India.

Smt. Addepalli Vivecananda Devi Garu has rendered this work (Biography of Sri Sadguru Malayala Swami) into English in very simple and fluent style. She brought out clearly at everystage how the Swamiji strove for the spread of Sanatana Dharma among the people, of all castes and both the sexes. We know of many religious leaders who were biased in favour of the higher castes in the hierarchy and did not care for the uplift of the so called lower castes and women. Smt. Vivecananda Devi has brought out in this book the yeoman service done by the Swamiji to these neglected sections of the people. Swamiji mentioned in many of his discourses that there was no justification whatsoever in neglecting a major proportion of the people and that every individual has a right to know the scriptures and lead a life of spirituality.

Smt. Vivecananda Devi was one of the chief organisers of the Chaturmasya Vratam conducted by Sri Malayala Swami at Rajahmundry in the year 1951 having worked as one of the secretaries of the committee. Having myself attended many of the discourses given by the Swamiji during this period I know that she had worked strenuously for the success of the Vratam. She was very much devoted to him and with first-hand knowledge of Swamiji's work she has clearly portrayed in this book all the facets of work of this great teacher. This book gives a true picture of Sri Malayala Swamiji's life mission which he has greatly succeeded in achieving during his life-time.

V. Satyanarayana Murty
Former UNESCO Expert and
Retired Principal

FOREWORD

Like the Ganga and the Godavari, Sanatana Dharma ever renews itself through its seekers, savants, saints and spiritual masters. 'Hinduism is a movement, not a position; a process, not a result; a growing tradition not a fixed revelation.' (S. Radhakrishnan: THE HINDU VIEW OF LIFE). Sanatana Dharma is the perennial philosophy common to all humanity; its social and cultural manifestation has acquired the name of Hinduism. We cannot separate the philosophy from the way of life, yet it becomes necessary to do so when custom and practice become so rigid and moribund in time that they threaten to obscure and obviate the springs of philosophy that once sustained them. The rigidities of caste system and priesthood shut out the Veda from non-brahmins and women; the language of Sanskrit itself was forbidden for the lower castes. The untouchables were denied entry into temples. In Kerala it was Narayana Guru, a great saint, who took upon himself the task of reform, long before the advent of Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar. Narayana Guru's movement brought enlightenment and harmony to the different castes and the different religious groups in Kerala. Velappa, a farmer's son born in 1885, went to Study Sanskrit and the Hindu scriptures under Sivalinga Guru, a disciple of Narayana Guru. The Advaita Ashram established by Narayana Guru had inspired similar Ashrams to be started by his disciples, and Sivalinga Guru had named his Ashram at Peringotkar as Narayan Ashram. Here Velappa had his early training in spiritual sadhana, and at the age of twenty, he took leave of his mother, obtained the blessings of both Sivalinga and Narayana Gurus and embarked on his mission of propagating the Sanatana Dharma.

After a tour of all the holy places and spiritual centres in India, he arrived at the Tirumala Hills and took his abode in a cave in Gogarbham. He went on with his tapasya till the call came for his appointed work among the people. By then he was already known as Malayala Swami by the language he spoke, and at Kotambedu the first Ashram was established at the instance of

his first disciples and followers. 'Sushka Vedanta Tamo Bhaskaram' was the first book he wrote, and as the name indicates, it was meant to sweep away the cobwebs of distortion and misinterpretation of the Vedanta that had accumulated through chauvinistic readings of our Sruti, Smriti and Puranic literature Vyasasramam near Kalahasti was established in 1926, which became the centre of Malayala Swamiji's life-long activities in the service of the Sanatana Dharma.

It was Andhra Pradesh and not Kerala that was chosen by the Swami, or rather allotted to him by Divine Will, through a series of circumstances which brought him and the people of the Andhra Desa together for about forty years, during which period Malayala Swami educated the Telugu people of all castes in the perennial philosophy of Hinduism, and brought about a general awareness of the spiritual values of life among them, besides giving personal guidance to individuals who required it of him. Through 'Yadartha Bharathi' a monthly magazine started in February 1927, through his annual conferences called 'Sanatana Vedanta Gyana Sabhas' held in remote villages like Palachur, Aravapalem, Pamarru, Nellatur. Muvva, Yerrapalli, Ungutur and Podur from 1926 right up to his death, and through the numerous books he wrote and arranged to get written by his disciples, Malayala Swami rendered the greatest service to the people and to the cause dearest to him. He was a Karma Yogin par excellence. The institutions established by him for the teaching of the Sanatana Dharma like 'Arsha Vidyalaya' and others admitted girls and women, whom he treated as equal and important in all respects along with the men folk. The Sabhas led to Satrayagas, which were extended as Gyana Yagnas and later culminated in Chaturmasya Vratas, in which the Harijans too joined, a development which came about as a rasult of the growth of consciousness and cultural awakening among the hibernating masses of the countryside.

It is interesting to note that Malayala Swami, a natural sannyasin from his childhood, was not ordained to be a Sannyasin by any guru and did not belong to any traditional order of sann-

yasins. He went on with his work till 1936, when he felt it necessary to don ochre clothes and establish an order of sannyasins for his followers to further facilitate the work they had been doing. The Haridwara Mandaleswara who had earlier spurned and denied hospitality to the followers of Malayala Swami later visited Vyasasaramam in 1938 and recognized the order of Sannyasins established by Malayala Swami as members of the brotherhood. This is one remarkable instance of how things developed naturally and at the appropriate time in such a way that Malayala Swami carried on his work without hindrance and without preconceived plans for building up or expanding his mission. Malayala Swami's life and work are a manifest example of 'nishkama karma'.

It was an era of doubt and revolt as well as an era of faith and reform. Particularly in South India and in the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh the non-brahmin movement was accompanied by atheism, a rejection of the Puranas and a revolt against all kinds of religious and ritual practices. Malayala Swami's conferences and propagation of the Vedic lore served a great deal in answering and mitigating the doubts and discontent of the non-brahmin classes. At Unguturu (1936) and at Donepudi (1940) he met these groups, and his attitude won their hearts, even though he might not have changed their convictions. But there were many converts too like Subba Reddi, who wrote a book on the Swami with the title 'Asangananda Gautam Buddha'. It was the Swami's non-attachment and love which conquered every heart.

I am happy that Srimati Vivecananda Devi, a well-known social worker and a spiritual aspirant has brought out this story of the Swami in English so that people outside Andhra Pradesh may be told about this illustrious Indian who devoted his life to the cause of the Sanatana Dharma. It is peolpe like Malayala Swami who keep the Ganga and the Godavari flowing, and it is in them India lives.

May God bless the author of this book for her endeavours.

Rajahmundry **R. S. Sudarshanam**

Chapter-1

CHILDHOOD

Mother India gave birth to many a Saint and Saviour. From time immemorial Godmen and masters like Sanakasanandana who were liberated souls, helped to liberate others. Even now great masters have come down as the representatives of God to emancipate mankind. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramatirtha, Mahatma Gandhiji, Sri Ramanamaharshi, Sri Narayana Garu, Swami Sivananda are some of the great sons of Mother India. Sri Malayala Swami also belongs to this category of spiritual leaders.

Since many ages knowledge was dispersed by the Upanishads which paved the path for eternal peace and happiness. As the wheel of time rotated the spikes of knowledge went down and atheism, unethical rituals spread, which paved the way for our downfall and slavery. The time had come when even the fundamental truths of our eternal Dharma were questioned. So, to rediscover these forgotten truths, to unveil true knowledge, spiritual masters have come down to this land of ours.

Sri Narayana Guru of Kerala fought with in-defatigable jest and without rest the un-ethical customs prevailing in the then society. At the same time he laid the foundation for spiritual enlightenment. Sri Siddha Guru Sivalinga was a pious soul, and a student of this master, was also a staunch follower who walked in the foot-steps of his guru. Sadguru Malayala Swami was fortunate in having both these great men as his initiators. He himself being an enlightened soul, he not only liberated himself, but exhorted all his disciples to pursue the path of liberation.

Kerala, the land where the great Adi-Shankara was born, has also given birth to our spiritual hero Malayala Swami. At a very tender age, with hunger for spiritual knowledge, he sought a guru, and did severe *Sadhana*. Then by foot he went on pilgrimage from Kanyakumari to Kanchenjunga. He visited on the way many pilgrim centres, and observed how people stuck to stupid custom

and un-traditional ways, which were sapping the very roots of our religion. So he determined to dedicate his life to eradicate these evils. He then decided to go to Tirupati hills to do austere spiritual sadhana for twelve years in Gogarbha cave. He visualised the inner light. After his enlightenment he determined to help the suffering world and to reform the society which was pervaded with many an evil trend. In the name of the venerable sage Vyasa, he started an Ashram at a place between Tirupati and Sri Kalahasti. He gave his life's blood for this service, and for which he is placed in the golden annals of our history.

There are three types of Saints. One resembles the fish in the water, the second type resembles the animal of the forest, the third and last is like the tortoise. As the fish cannot survive without water, this type of Saint cannot live leaving the solitude of the forest; the second type like the forest animal cannot survive without the society of men; whereas the third type can manage very well to live in solitude as well as in multitude. Sri Malayala Swami belongs to this third category of great masters, whose life has been a beacon light to many a spiritual aspirant.

It is the fortune of ours, as this great master, born in Kerala, travelling all over India ultimately selected Andhra Pradesh for his teaching and preaching.

It was due to Malayala Swami and Swami alone, by whose very presence the whole of Andhra had become spiritually vibrant, by whose very teaching of equality and fraternity the demons of caste and creed fled and all came under his spiritual banner and realised his heritage from Saints and Rishis. By his grace Sanskrit was taught to the common man on the street. By his spiritual fervour great epics like *Yogavasista* were translated into the regional language by his erudition acclaimed to the world at large that Sanatana Vedanta and Dharma was not the monopoly of only a few castes, but was the property of all. By his excellent knowledge of the Scriptures dispelled the ignorant, uncivilised and foolhardy customs of the society. Owing to his very compassion and pity, the women, and the downtrodden were given an opportunity to study the Bhagavadgita. Swami Sivananda

commented on the life of Sri Malayala Swami thus: "His very life is a commentary of the *Gita*". Such is the life of our Gurudev.

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

In South India, Kerala State is well known for its scenic beauty. Since many thousands of years Keralites navigated the oceans and went to far off lands and continents for trade, thus enhancing the reputation of India. Travancore and Cochin, though two different states, have been merged into one state and named Kerala after India attained independence. The great Master Sankaracharya who gave 'Advaita' knowledge to this world was born here. 'One caste, one religion and one God' was the cry of Sri Narayana Gurudev of this epoch, who was also born in Kerala, has no peer either in spiritual field or social reform.

Very near Guruvayur in the District of Trichur there was a rivulet which joined the sea. On its bank there was a small village called Enngandur. This village was surrounded by green fields and palmgroves, and the population was full of cultivators. Among them lived a pious farmer-couple named Karriappa and Nottiyamma. This middle class family spent most of their time either in cultivation or in the practice of medicine. When time was available they studied Mahabharata and Bhagavatha. Serving Sadhus and Mendicants who visited their village became a regular feature with them.

Since her childhood, serving food to the needy was a habit to Nottiyamma. Now and then she would pay a visit to Guruvayur temple and pray Lord Krishna to give her good children.

Nottiyamma gave brith to two sons. In the year 1885 on March 27, Friday, which according to the Indian almanac was Pardhiva Year and Chaitra Suddha Ekadasi. At 7 hours 15 minutes in the morning she gave birth to the third son. That this little child of hers, in future, would become a great saint she could never imagine and that he would be the forebinger of spiritual nowledge to the innumerable Andhras, no one could have

imagined including his parents and relatives. The little boy named Velappa was fondled by his mother, verymuch. Afterwards his mother had a female child.

Nottiyamma was a strict desciplinarian. After morning and evening routine prayers, bhajan was conducted. She used to recite stories of Gods and stressed on good behaviour. If children are not mended in their childhood their character shall not be good when grown up. To have such a great desciplinarian as a mother was indeed very fortunate.

The very fragrance of the flower is known when it is still a bud. Velappa's greatness was witnessed even during his very childhood. When the child was not even two years old, whenever the mother put him on a smooth bedding he would crawl out and sleep on the floor; when put in the cradle with soft bedding he would cry his lungs out till he is removed. When a sadhu visited her home the worried Nottiyamma expressed her fears to him. He asked the baby to be brought to him and after thorough examination said: "I feel this boy looks very strange. His very appearance is like that of a spiritual master. Please take good care of him". So saying he left that village. Mother Nottiyamma was impelled to believe the truth of his words.

Worrying about the child's future the parents consulted an astrologer, giving the star, the date and time of the birth of their child. "The pumpkin creeper sowed in one place spreads all over, flowers and fruits, so this little boy shall not stay in the place of his birth. Others shall enjoy the fruits of his teachings," predicted the astrologers.

Though they were overjoyed at the great prospects of their son, at the same time the worry that he would never live with them was great. With these mixed feelings they brought up their son.

Velappa grew up day by day. But unlike other children he would abstain from playfulness and mischief. He will never ask for his food or drink, sit all alone and will be pondering over some thing or other.

EDUCATION

By the time Velappa was five his parents sent him to a school. Apart from his vernacular Malayalam, he was taught a bit of Sanskrit in the school, which was a regular routine since many years. May be this was one of the reasons why Malayalam was much influenced by Sanskrit language.

On what auspicious moment the letter 'Ohm' was taught him we are not aware of, but it was the beginning of his foundation for his spiritual career.

" 'Ohm' denotes creative energy and all-pervading consciousness." says Lord Krishna. The study of which helps to attain liberation was the only education that is worth it. Spiritual growth alone was the real aim of education, realised young Velappa.

Whenever Ramayana or Mahabharata was recited in the village, Velappa would be the first to attend. When descriptions about any saint or his Ashram was read Velappa with closed eyes would go into ecstacies, which astonished the elders of the village.

Day by day his love of meditation abounded and he would sit for hours together without food. Worrying herself, the mother would call him several times to take his food. Some times she would take a tray, to where he was meditating. The boy would get angry for this disturbance. One day when his mother brought him food he kicked it. Since this happened his poor mother patiently waited for her son. While the boy was so absorbed the tired mother would fall asleep. He after meditation noticing her thus and, not wanting to disturb would go off to sleep without food.

"Without self-descipline there is no achievement", thinking so he prayed daily and cultivated the habit of helping others. He fasted on every Ekadasi day (11th day of every full moon and new moon) and the whole night would keep awake and meditate or do bhajan. On every Monday and on every (New moon) Masasivaratri day too he would fast. This habit of fasting continued till his last days.

MERCY AND KINDNESS

One day while returning from school all boys noticed a hunter selling birds he caught. Contrary to his habit, running home Velappa requested his mother for some money, which surprised her. Presuming that the little one wanted to buy some eatables, she gave the money. Running with the money to the hunter he purchased the birds. Then flew them into the sky among cheers and clapping. When this episode was narrated to his mother, she felt glad at the mercy and kindness of her son. Embracing him she said "May God bless you. Always have mercy on others".

Small kids, enjoy pestering animals and pets, but Velappa whenever he saw his friends teasing them would chastise and say "Friends ! love all creature and never harm them". They also willingly followed his advice.

Even today at Sri Vyasasramam we see " A kind heart is the abode of God," a saying Swamiji loved. This saying was put in his cottage by which all devotees were made aware of the power of kindness.

He would seek the blessings of elders, and mendicants or Sadhus visiting the village and would invite them home, whom his mother would serve with care and devotion. The little boy with rapt attention would hear the trials and tribulations of these pious men.

BOGUS SADHU

A Sadhu came to the village Engandyur with tresses of locked hair, body smeared with ashes, neck adorned with big rudraksha beads. The villagers paid their respects. Sitting among them, he said, "My children ! leaving southern region at a tender age I went to Benaras. I served many a saint and sage by whose blessings I acquired many spiritual powers. Now taking pity on you all I came down south". On hearing this the villagers prayed and requested him to stay for a few days to enlighten

them. He consented for this proposal and all the arrangements for his stay were made.

As usual Velappa with great reverence served the sadhu and was willingly bringing him small things he needed. He thus came very close to the Sadhu. After two days the Sadhu told the villagers, "My friends, I have a garland of Rudraksha brought from Benares. By squeezing these beads I shall get Ganga water, but this can be obtained only once a day. Who ever that needs this Ganga water have to donate only one rupee. Avail this opportunity".

On hearing this the innocent villagers came in thousands, believing that such miracles can be performed. The Sadhu filled his box with the money in no time and thus two days passed.

Our little hero had his own doubts about this spurious Sadhu. He wanted to watch and discover the real truth. When the Sadhu went out he examined his beads and found out that they are not genuine, but were made of a cork-like material which can easily absorb water and when squeezed water came out again, thus the Sadhu duped the villagers. Our little hero ran to the villagers and gave out the truth. The villagers taught a lesson to this spurious Sadhu and praised little Velappa for his power of observance and intelligence.

Since his childhood Velappa was observant and used his discretion. He would never believe what others told on the face of it, but would discern and discriminate. "Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava" he believed every word of it. Later on during his daily discourses Swamiji used to say, "Those who cannot revere the parents as living gods cannot serve God, who cannot be seen.

The elder sons in the family helped their parents in the household duties. Being the youngest and the loving child of the mother, he attended school. The elder sons warned their mother for petting him too much. The result he would be a spoiled child, they acclaimed.

Velappa's daily routine was to teach his friends bajans and prayer. When they were departing he would distribute prasad begging it from his mother. One day it so happened that he dis-

tributed the dried copra, seeing which his elder brother started scolding him, but his mother pacified the elder son.

PRACTICING MEDITATION

Velappa would sit all alone in the cottage near his home and meditate for many an hour without taking his food.

Once during the month of Sravana, he sat alone meditating. The moon rose high in the sky. but he did not get up. Thinking that his brother was wasting time doing nothing, the elder brother went in and slapped and said, "Well, get up and come out quickly," so saying he went out, but Velappa did not go out. With added anger he again was trying to enter the hut. To his surprise, saw a great white bull (Nandi) lying across the entrance. Shaking with fear he immediately ran to his mother. "Mother, I have seen a Nandi lying across brother's cottage entrance. He does not seem to be an ordinary being, but a spiritual soul. Here after let us not say anything to him", said the elder brother. Mother hurried to the cottage but to her surprise there was nothing there. Afterwards she questioned Velappa about the Nandi and the brother's slapping. He replied he was not aware of any thing. The mother shed tears of fear as well as of joy. She, in her heart of hearts, realised that her dear son one day or other would leave home and go away to far off countries. From that day onwards no one in the family distrubed him, in his meditations. The great Merciful Lord, by sending his Nandi protected his devotee. Krishna said in Geeta, "Those who surrender completely, their welfare shall be taken care of".

As days passed by, Velappa's love of Sanskrit study doubled along with his love for Japa. He realised that to study the Vedas and Upanishads, the little Sanskrit he knew was not enough. Relatives advised his parents to send him for study of English with which they completely agreed. He was obstinate and refused to study in English schools. Ultimately his parents had to agree and send him wherever he wanted for furthering his Sanskrit studies.

"Intensive study of the Divine language must be there if one wants to realise God". Thinking thus Velappa left for Narayana Guru Ashram of Sidda Siva Linga Guru.

Chapter - 2

GURUKULA STUDY

During the 19th Century, the British rule was in its height of glory. The National Congress was fighting for independence. By then Gandhiji did not enter the arena of Indian politics.

While political atmosphere was in such a pell mell, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa gave his clarion call for spiritual revival of Sanatana Vedanta through his devoted student Swami Vivekananda. The year Swamiji passed away Velappa was born. In the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1983. Swamiji advocated the greatness of Sanatana Dharma and once for all established the spiritual superiority and enhanced India's prestige.

NARAYANA GURU

In Kerala a great soul and saint named Narayana Guru did yeomen service for the upliftment of the society and its spiritual awakening. Eighteen years after Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, in the village called Champajendi near Tiruvanantapur in Kerala, Narayana was born. His mother was Kuttiyamma and father Madan Ashan. His pet name during his childhood was '*Nanu*'. During his academic career he showed great interest in Sanskrit studies.

During his search for truth, he travelled all over India and served saints like Chettyyambi and thus became well versed with the Yoga Sutras and its sastra. Many a pandit praised him for his erudity and scholarship in Sanskrit and his mother tongue Malayalam. He was also a great poet.

As an evolved soul, Narayana Guru went into deep forests and meditated in a place called 'Aruvipura' for a very long period and attained self-realisation. He became so well-known for his piousness, that people thronged to him seeking boons, believing that he was an Avatar or Godman. With the help of the people, Narayana Guru constructed a Siva temple to perform tapasya there.

In Kerala, the Social customs were oppressing. The so-called middle and rich classes treated lower classes and untouchables as their chattels and exploited them in every way. So much so millions of Hindus got converted into either Christianity or Muhammadanism. Narayana Guru, born in a very ordinary family, watching this exploitation, determined to eradicate it to the best of his ability.

To set aside these evils, this great soul not only devoted all his life but sacrificed it. Since time immemorial untouchability was the curse of India. He had to fight incessantly the unethical animal sacrifice in rituals, the drinking habit, the differentiation in castes, and lack of fraternity. Hearing the inspired call of Sri Narayana Guru, thousands of young men threw aside shackles of caste and unorthodox customs. Some became spiritual aspirants and Sanyasins. Inspired by his speeches a few thousands abstained from being converted.

Ultimately, a place called Varkala, twenty miles from Trivandrum, was selected and an Ashram named *Sivagiri* was started as a spiritual centre. He started a Sanskrit school, where the orphaned and poor were joined without any distinction of caste and creed.

As the Ramakrishna Mission had started service institutions like schools and hospitals, Sri Narayana Guru like-wise started many an institution. He worked to eradicate untouchability even before Gandhiji ever thought of it. He weeded temple gardens and dilapidated temples, became the places for starting schools for all the downtrodden communities. When the socalled orthodox pandits questioned his right in educating the untouchables, being an erudite scholar and an eloquent orator, he quoted many a shastra and defeated them, thus establishing the right of the down-trodden classes.

He established several educational institutions and temples. In 'Alwee' in Kerala 'Advaita Ashram' was started to establish the truth of all Religions and equality of all men. In Nilgiris Narayana Gurukula is still emanating and radiating spirituality.

Gandhiji and Ravindranath Tagore paid a visit to this Mahatma and were impressed by his wonderful work. Narayana Guru and his followers were the first to lead the satyagraha for temple entry of Harijans at Vaikom in Kerala.

Still fighting the parasites that were eating the vitals of Hinduism, the great soul passed away on 20th September 1928. *One God, One Religion* and *One Caste* was his persistant call and 'May peace and happiness reign every where' was his only wish. To re-establish the forgotten truths of our Sanatana Dharma he was born and Sri Malayala Swami being a devotee of this order, followed in his footsteps to serve the Andhras.

SIDDA SIVALINGA GURU

The great master Narayana Guru had multitude of devotees. A good student goes in search of a superb teacher, so also, a great master shall be in the look out for a devoted student. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda's lives are living examples.

Among the dedicated students of Sri Narayana Guru, Sivalinga was one. He meditated and attained mukti* and so people called him Siddasiva Linga. Sidda means one who attained mukti.

He taught Karma and Bhakti Yogas with such spiritual fervour emanating from his compassionate face, which stood on a hefty and strong body. With the permission of his Guru he started an Ashram named 'Narayana Ashram' in a village called Perimgottkara, which was only ten miles away from the main Ashram. People considered him as the representative of his Guru. He came to be well-known not only near his village, but all over the district.

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mukti — liberation.

Chapter - 3

GURUKULA STAY

Velappa, finishing the elementary studies in Sanskrit and was in search of a spiritual master. The home atmosphere was not suitable for furthering his Sanskrit studies and spiritual hankering. With the permission of his parents he left for Narayana Ashram and sought shelter at the Guru's feet. He, with kind affection, received him for special spiritual training.

Velappa started to live in the Ashram by abiding and respecting all the rules there. A teacher was appointed for teaching Sanskrit. Along with these studies, prayer and puja were conducted without any discrimination. Even fraternity and equality were practiced among devotees. Spiritual lectures were delivered for their benefit. Velappa was so happy to be able to study in such a pious atmosphere.

In old India, Gurukulas were the very centres of education. *'Acharya Devo Bhava'* – Gurus were worshipped as living masters. Men of wisdom said, "A man who thinks that the teacher is only a man and not a living God, that a mantra is only an assemblage of words alone, the flowing water in a River is only water, the idol in the temple is only a stone and not God, can never aspire to become a spiritual aspirant". In those days Gurus were taking good care of their students. A motherless child and masterless student cannot survive long. Guru with piousness and student with concentration are self-complimentary.

PUJA OF THE DIETIES

Swami later on narrated his early experiences. "If you concentrate on the diety's image putting flowers becomes difficult. Thinking the meaning of the Mantra, repeating it and by offering flowers one cannot concentrate on God. All these difficulties I faced. Practice produced success and control. Repeating the Mantra with the tongue, performing puja with the hands and meditating in the mind was possible".

"There are persons who denounce idol-worship. Others are there who think idol-worship is essential. When the Rajah of Alwar laughed at Swami Vivekananda for defending idol-worship, Swamiji taught a good lesson, which story every one knows".

The devotion with which Velappa performed the daily puja helped him a lot in later days. Worshiping an idol as a routine for daily bread shall attain nothing, whereas worshipping with piety goes a long way in the spiritual path. He realised later that mental worship was far more superior than idol worship. While he was in 'Gogarbha' cave, he wrote in his book 'Puja Pancharatnamala' : "Meditation is ofcourse better than idol worship but I vouchsafe that it is not as easy as you imagine it to be. In principle, I decry idol worship, but for those who are not mentally grownup and are weak the only way is this. The reason for this may be easily explained. Mind is volatile and unsteady. Without constant practice and concentration, meditation is very difficult. With the idol as a prop, one can easily attain the absolute state".

In performing puja, naturally, his studies were neglected. Swami said on one occasion, "What we could achieve in a day you could never achieve in your life time. We slept at 11 P.M. resting for a while, would get up at 2. A.M. to prepare our lessons till 4 A.M. Then took bath, start puja and finish by sunrise, afterwards sat for Japa. Then, prepare old lessons and go to our teacher for new lessons. Along with my class lessons I used to byheart the Geeta Slokas also. Again by 11 A.M. I went to perform the afternoon puja and then only took lunch. I would sit till 2 P.M. to revise my back lessons, by which time the teacher came to teach us till 5 P.M."

Vedanta is so vast, the intricacies are many. Students have many doubts. Without a proper Guru attaining truth will be difficult.

EDUCATION

With great zeal and enthusiasm our little Brahmachari started his studies. "Daily you have to get byheart Sabdhas to master the

Sanskrit language" was the guru's warning, with this our little student started by-hearting. As the differentiation of genders was difficult, even after three days of by-hearting, he was unable to go further, so got disgusted and threw the book and went and sat under a tree, meditating. His determination to master the book was doubled. He started once again the arduous task of by hearting. But once again he had to throw the book with disgust. Perseverence and patience are the characteristics by which the goal is reached. Ultimately in ten days our little hero could succeed. The Guru was surprised and appreciating he taught him with much enthusiasm.

As iron is attracted towards the magnet he was drawn towards the guru. Except serving the guru he had no other avocation. The very wish of his master was enough to plunge into work and then only he would start his puja and prayer. Then he would attend the guests of the Ashram. Guru's work, God's worship and attendance on guests were synonyms to him. Lastly he thought of his personal work.

Without even a little variation, he attended to all these. People who visited the ashram, seeing this unique devotion, called him with the nick name 'Bhakta', though his name was Velappa. Sivalinga Swami pleased with his devotion appointed him for performing puja three times a day in the Ashram temple. Though burdened with additional work he never stopped his meditation. He used to say to his devotees and students in later days.

"I am like any one of you, but with sheer application I could attain this stage. There are days when I byhearted even twenty five slokas a day".

This hard work during his stay in the Gurukula came to his aid later when he became a master in Andhra Pradesh. From the lecture dias he would quote at a stretch, many a sloka from various religious books.

While fighting the useless and verbose metaphysical philosophers on one side and attacking the purely academic pundits all the above good qualities came to his rescue.

"Kim-Kim-na-sadhyate Kalpalatena-Vidya"

What can't be achieved by the great diamond mine of education ?

He would also repeat to himself "great saints like Sri Shankara could become world teachers due to their education".

During his study if any description of an Ashram came, his consciousness reflected some unknown scenes especially the description of Vasista's Ashram in Raghuvamsa and Parvathi Devi's tapasya in Kumara Sambhava impressed him very much. He read and re-read them and pined for such experiences.

THE FIVE PURIFICATIONS AND THE FIVE DESCIPLINES

Velappa started practicing the five desciplines of outward purification, namely wearing clean clothes, living in neat places, using clean food, uttering pure words and keeping the body clean. According to his guru's wish he also started the practice of internal disciplines. Abstinence from certain foods, timely meditation, stay in one place, desciplining the mind and its thoughts. The shastras say that all these disciplines are a must for a spiritual aspirant.

The way he strictly observed this discipline of speech is surprising. Unless it was essential he would never speak and would be silent. Velappa once got very angry and uttered an undesirable word. Immediately realising his mistake he apologised and not satisfied even with this, he branded his tongue with hot embers.

During sadhana Velappa took food once a day. Later on when he became Malayalaswami he said, "Only after people started taking Upahara in the evenings their down-fall started, so beware of over-eating". Swamiji also repeated, "Devotees feed with love, but Sadhu's downfall starts. Never take except water in between your food. One abstinence leads to another which paves the path for realisation and meditation."

Regarding the selection of the place to live he expressed, 'I know people over-eating, but by the time it digests, converts

into blood and semen, time lapses and only then impure thoughts cloud the mind. Beware of an impure place, instantaneously that atmosphere polutes you. Spiritual aspirants should be very careful in their living environment. If by sheer accident one is forced to stay in an impure place, one has to practice five penances namely (1) Starvation (2) Silence (3) Mantra Japa (4) Repentance and lastly (5) Annadana (distribution of food to poor).

TAKING MANTRA AND YOGA EXERCISES

Observing his conduct, spiritual aspirations and conscious practice, Sidda Sivalinga on an auspicious day initiated a mantra to his student. The eight methods of Yama and Niyama, (External and internal desciplines of purification) ways of meditation and its experiences, the secrets of Yoga, the constant repetition of 'Ohm' and its realisation was also taught. Velappa was over joyed at his guru's love.

Velappa would get up in the early morning hours, take bath, start praying, Rama, Siva, Venkateswara, Narayana, Dattatreya, Ganesh, Subrahmanya, Saraswathi and Hanuman etc. He never differentiated between Siva and Kesava.

Without legs one cannot walk. Bodily descipline is one leg and spiritual practice is the other leg. He is sure to fall like the tree whose roots are eaten by worms, white ants falls to the ground with flowers, fruits and leaves, all the godliness flies as the birds fly away.

Velappa practiced Sidhasana and Padmasana and was in complete control of his breath, so much so, his physic grew healthy and strong. With the help of his guru he understood the intricacies of Patanjali yoga sustras. In the practice of Yoga the study of books like Hata Yoga Pradeepika, Randa Sanhitha, Yoga Sikopanishat, Yoga-kundo-panishat etc., helped him, but all these books he studied to acquire further knowledge. Later on on one accassion he said, "I was practising some of these Yoga's even during my stay at 'Gogarbha' cave, but I believe in pure (knowledge) Gyana and Bhakti".

MENTAL WORSHIP

Velappa apart from the murthi puja or idol worship started mental wor)hip. Once heart is the temple, diety is the idol. repeating the mantra is called mental worship. Another kind of mental worship is, thousand petalled lotus is the heart, God is the light in the middle of the lotus, devotion sacred water, external and internal purities flowers, faith camphor, truth the unflickering light and mental sacrifice the offering.

Velappa drew strength by these two types of mental worship and felt the in-dwelling presence of God. His innate egoism eradicated. The tentacles of parental affection and love also, he could easily detach.

STUDY OF PHILOSOPHICAL TREATISE

The effect of Teachings of Prophets

Velappa mastered Sanskrit and studied many a great author. Gita study had become a regular routine with him. Kathopanishath he by-hearted. Patanjali Yoga Sutras became dear to him. He mastered as years passed not only the ten Upanishads, but all the hundred others, During these days he was acquainted with Yoga Vasistha where in when Sree Ramachandra was stricken with meloncholy, Guru Vasistha taught detachment. He studied the lives of Buddha, Muhammad, Jesus Christ and understood all the intrecacies of these religions. The life of Buddha, especially his love and kindness towards all living creatures impressed him much.

At this time the impact of Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda's teachings was very great. So naturally this impact of their teaching was great on Velappa's personality also.

UPADESA IN MAHAVAKYAS

Whenever any doubt arose Velappa would immediately run to his guru and get it cleared. Guru also encouraged him to meditate further, after clearing doubts. He was determined to attain Nir-

vikalpa-Samadhi, but attaining this super-consciousness was not easy. Krishna repeatedly said in the Geeta "one attains Samadhi after practice, in many births." So realising the truth of this, Velappa's disappointment was a little abated. Thus many a year passed in the student life of Velappa.

VISIT TO NARAYANA GURU

One day Sri Siddha Guru, taking pity said, "My dear boy! due to your pious life in previous births you have taken this body. Whatever you practiced was the best. Time has come for their fructification. Do not be disheartened. My Guru Narayana Yatindra is the personification of knowledge. Visit him and take his blessings. All your wishes shall be fulfilled." Tear's of joy flowed from Velappa's eyes.

Immediately he started for the Ashram. On seeing the Guru he offered flowers and fruits and prostrated. Narayana Guru could easily recognise the qualities of a would-be master. He blessed Velappa and said "Young one, you are blessed. You shall realise the Brahman very soon".

Velappa was overjoyed, moved by the Guru's revolutionary speeches. Understanding his philosophical trends, he stayed there for a short time but the burning desire for realisation increased day by day. The impulse to render service to the needy and downtrodden grew immensely. He after returning back to Perimgotka told in detail every thing to his Guru. Sivalinga congratulated him.

Sivalinga Guru in daily teaching used to praise the benefits of going on a pilgrimage. Many a saint and unknown master lived in these places and sanctify them. Since going to Narayana Guru's Ashram Velappa's desire to go on pilgrimage increased.

In Engangdyur Velappa's mother was pining for her son. She once or twice sent word to him to pay a visit but he was not willing to go home, Meanwhile his mother became bedridden. On hearing this Velappa went to his Guru and prayed "My Master! my mother is very ill. I have to go and serve her in these last

days. Apart from this on hearing the benefits of pilgrimage my mind is bent on it and want to go on foot all over India. Please permit me to go. I shall pay my homage after my return".

Guru gave his consent for this proposal and blessing said, "My son! go and serve your mother. I am happy over your decision, but do not forget to practice, Brahmacharya, abstinence, Kindness (Ahimsa), Aparigraha (do not accept any thing from others). These not only shall save you but serve you. My boy, also remember if the doors of your heart are wide-open and not closed with deceipt. Moksha shall be easily attained". Velappa proceeded towards home. His parents were overjoyed at seeing their son, He right earnestly started serving them.

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Chapter - 4

PILGRIMAGE

With the utmost love and care Velappa served his mother. Though she regained health, mentally was not at peace with-herself.

His two elder brothers were married long back. "If Velappa also is married, he shall not leave home" said many a neighbour. Parents in their ignorance never realised that their son who gave his heart and soul to the lady of spirituality shall never fall for any human girl.

Velappa started living in the thatched hut next to his home and started preaching Bhakti to his neighbours.

"By sticking to one's home nothing can be attained. How could Siddartha, the prince, attain Buddah-hood ? How could Shankara become the world teacher without leaving his home ? Without sacrifice nothing can be attained. Through his sacrifice Jesus Christ became the son of God. Muhammod became a Prophet by giving his all away. In the good old days, Maitreyi, Gargi, Sulabha and other saintly women renounced the world and sacrificed their every thing. Praise worthy are the love and sacrifice of Bhakta Meerabai. Even in this present age the biographies of Sri Rama Krishna and Vivekananda teach this lesson. When oil burns and evoperates it dispenses darkness. By trials and tribulations only a man achieves experience." Thinking thus, he decided to leave home and enter the arena of the world in search of truth.

LEAVING HOME

Velappa made up his mind when he was twenty years old to search for truth by visiting pilgrim centres where great saints live. But his mother was keeping watch on him.

One day Velappa was unable to sleep. His conscience proclaimed, "You are wasting time. Self help is the best help. Go in search of truth. If not, you shall once again fall in the cycle of birth and death".

The little bird when gets wings, shall fly away from its mother's nest. Young Velappa, while every one was in deep sleep, left home like the fish that escaped from the net.

Next day, Nottiyamma, not finding her son in the hut, started crying. This news spread like fire among the neighbours. They found a letter saying, "My goldly parents, please donot worry on account of me. As long as you give shelter and food to Sadhus, I too shall be provided by the Almighty. I am leaving to do God's work".

Neighbour's consoled his mother, but she knew in her heart of hearts that the astrologers' prediction came true. She did her best to serve the Sadhus that visited the village, praying that this would in some unknown way protect her son.

ADVANTAGES OF PILGRIMAGE

Visiting pilgrim centres have great advantages. The vibrations of pious saints and godmen living there do effect the same minded people. This is the reason why though thousands live in such places, all their' thoughts are not affected except those who have the same kind of pious thoughts.

India is full of railway lines, but Velappa preferred to trave by foot only. During these travels one may come across a good master, if he already had none. One can learn the customs and traditions of various people along with their languages. In a few places the flowing waters of the rivers have good effect, where al in some places the minerals in the earth act well on the body. All these facts help the spiritual aspirant in his meditations.

As Prince Siddartha left at night, Velappa also left at midnight and walked quickly twenty miles by sunrise. Except a racksack, a book and pencil, a vessel for drinking, one or two books like Geeta and Patanjali, he carried nothing with him. He reached Gokarnam which was in Karnataka. Daily he walked twenty miles and where ever there was a choultry, he took food they distributed. Where there were no such places-he begged for alms form housewives, Seeing his luminous and innocent face

housewives offered food with affection. If any one offered him money, he gently refusd and blessed them and the country they were born for their benefaction.

He never stopped more than one night in a place and not more than two days in the pilgrim centres and temples.

TRAVEL IN KARNATAKA

Visiting many temples and Ashrams in the western ghats he reached Udipi, where Madhavacharya taught dualism. This also being the centre of Sanskrit learning he visited many such schools. From there he proceeded to Subrahmanya, where Kumaraswami's temple was situated. Being located in deep forest this place was suitable for meditation. Staying there for a few days, Velappa went to Dharmasthala, where Lord Manjunatheswara was worshipped. After visiting Shanker Narayana Kshetra he proceeded to Mahabaleshwar which was situated on the western coast. While meditating, the idea that his only brass begging bowl may be stolen, thatspoiled his concentration, he threw it away and in its stead took a coconut bowl.

TRAVEL IN NORTHERN INDIA

Velappa's attention was now drawn towards Pandharpur in Maharashtra. He was faced with many difficulties on the way. Except dry maize rotis nothing was available. Even these rotis he could not get daily. Due to diarrhea he was forced to stop in choultries for rest. Even in such a state he was not tempted to go back. But a native of his state travelling with him went back, after spending the little money he brought.

One day after much suffering, determining to face even death but not to go back, he fell asleep. A white claded old-man came and gave him a pill saying "You shall never get ill". Swami later on narrated this episode and said, "Till now I never again fell ill". After Pandharpur visit where great bhaktas like Gyana Dev Sakkubai, Mukta were liberated, he proceeded to Bombay. Omkareswar was a pilgrim centre on the banks of Narmada River where he stayed for two days.

He visited Girnam and Sudhama Ashram and then directly proceeded towards Punjab. Here Sadhus of Atmarama cult practiced Hatayoga. He visited the golden temple of Amritsar and then proceeded towards Kashmir. After seeing the scenic beauty of this beautiful land he travelled towards Haridwar. He was forced to stop for a night halt on the way in a choultry where he previously stopped, but the nasty behaviour of the choultry manager in giving him shelter pained him. He promised to himself that he would never again stay in the same place even if necessity forced him.

BRINDAVAN

On the way to Brindavan he had to cross a virulent river. The boatman refused to take him across unless he was paid. "For one who is determined to cross this very sea of mundane world, crossing an ordinary river should not be difficult", thinking in this strain he started swimming. The current in the mid-stream swept him away. He caught hold of a bush and reached the land. "God saves those who have no earthly saviour" came true of him.

He at last reached Brindavan, The Bhakti of the people and their constant Japa of Lord Radha Krishna's name over-joyed him. He stayed there for nearly one month. During that time being well versed in Sanskrit he conversed with the high priests in Sanskrit. Whereas with ordinary men he spoke in Hindi, which was full of Sanskrit words.

HARIDWAR

On his way to Haridwar he stopped at Kurukshetra where Lord Krishna taught Geeta to his beloved disciple Arjuna. He visited many Gurudwaras and Ashrams. Arya Samaj Services attracted his attention. While going from Haridwar to Badarinath he observed their gurukuls for girls and boys and their equality he appreciated. This appreciation inspired him to start a Kanya Gurukul in later days. He regarded the founder of this cult, Dayananda Saraswathi very high. He felt sad at the Poisoning of Sri Dayananda who did wonderful service by eradicating religious slavery by laying stress on character.

From Haridwar our little Swamiji proceeded to Rishikesh where there were plenty of Ashrams on either side of the river Ganga. Kali Kambal Baba, a great saint himself, taking pity on the famishing sadhus, founded many choultries to give free food, with the help of his rich devotees.

The pious atmosphere and the pure vibrations of the place helped him a great deal to attain samadhi sthithi very soon. He spent three months in this wonderful environment. He once again started for Badarikashrama. The scenic beauty of the great Himalayas impressed him very much. Often he went into deep raptures. After reaching Badari he plunged into the warm spring. *"Here is the place where Adi Shankara wrote his commentary on Brahma-Sutras, Vysa did Tapasya,"* thinking thus he meditated.

BRAHMA KAPALA — HOMAGE TO FORE-FATHERS

On reaching Brahmakapala many purohits flocked, promising to pay offerings to his fore-father's and get them liberated. These oblations freed them, they argued. Velappa refused to do oblations since his liberation he wanted first and not that of his fore-fathers. Then an old priest offered to do the puja. Velappa did not want prayers for the welfare of his family or his children as he was a Brahmachari. He expressed his doubt about the sincerity of the priests who utter all kinds of good wishes in a place which was sacred. The old and wise priest said that if priests were not pious even their blessings shall never come true. After the offering of oblations to his fore-fathers he himself offered oblations to all the living beings in this world of ours.

After staying for forty days he started back to Rishikesh and Haridwar. He went to Prayag, the place where Ganga, Yamuna and the undercurrent Saraswathi meet. Taking two bottles of water for Rameswaram he went to Benares.

BENARES

Entering Benares he took his bath at Manikarnika ghat and then went to perform Abhisheka (offering of water) to Lord Kasi Viswanatha. He decided to stay for four months as these months were supposed to be Chaturmasya months.

Kasi, the centre of Veda and Sanskrit learning, attracted him very much. He spent his days visiting all the Veda schools and Maths. But he was more surprised at the discrimination shown by learned men in teaching Sanskrit and giving alms to the students.

Daily he took bath in one of the ten ghats and repeated mantra some lakhs of times. Pandits were spell-bound and heard his prompt replies in Sanskrit at their questions in Upanishads and Vedas.

After the months of Chaturmasya he proceeded to Vishnu Gaya where he once again offered oblations to all the dead souls. After three days of stay he proceeded to Buddha Gaya where Lord Buddha had his Mahanirvana. He meditated here for three days. His next trip was to Navadweep, the birth place of Lord Krishna. He felt immense joy and peace seeing hundreds of women devotees. From here he went to Calcutta. Swamiji narrated a very interesting story about this time.

"While nearing Calcutta I had to travel with a group of Sadhus who were addicted to hukka. We all had our luncheon at a choultry. From here we had to travel nearly forty miles in a deep forest. I was hesitating how to travel forty miles at a stretch. Then one of the Sadhus said, "You see ! we can just take hukka, once or twice by the very strength and power of it we can walk twenty at a stretch, then break journey at a place in the forest, rest till early morning hours and then cross the forest and reach our destination for luncheon on the next day". As they persuaded me for a long time, though knowing that hukka was not good, feeling very tired at that weak movement, I inhaled hukka once. I was tempted to take it the second time also. Meanwhile I was forced to go for urination. In my unconscious state I did not know what I was doing. Meanwhile the Sadhus who were supposed to be my friends and well-wishers leaving me all alone, proceeded. I slept there like a log till 3 A.M in the morning. Then suddenly having come to realise the danger of inhaling hukka I determined never to touch it again in my life time. I did strictly adhere to it. So never be persuaded by your friends to take these drugs. I could not even reach the

destination even for luncheon time. But never felt sorry for this, but I felt deeply, since I lost valuable time by not meditating. Since that day I have been teaching the danger of such narcotics. Not only these drugs give any real happiness but they drive us away from true realisation. Such people's very nearness is dangerous. So beware of such Sadhus".

Kali Temple

In Calcutta, Velappa visited Kali temple and on seeing the fearful idol of Kali he prayed, "Mother Kali ! you are the Universal Mother of every living being. Why do you look so angry and fearful ? Oh Mother ! the day of judgement has not yet come. Be merciful".

From Calcutta Vellappa proceeded to Puri Jagannatha. In this pilgrim centre, caste, creed and colour had no difference. Everybody was entitled for the darshan of the Lord and his Prasad. He stayed for a week and proceeded towards Andhra Pradesh.

As he entered Andhra Pradesh he visited the temple of Simhachalam and passing through deep forests he paid a visit to Bhadrachalam where, Sri Rama along with his spouse and brother Lakshmana lived in the Parnasala (hut made with leaves). He stayed here for a short while and proceeded to Srisailam. There were many caves near this temple. He meditated for sometime in these caves. The tribals there, called Chenchus, daily provided him with fruits and milk.

He visited Tirupati hills where even today many devotees feel the very presence of Lord Venkateswara. While touring in Andhra Pradesh he badly felt the need of organised ashrams for the stay of Sadhu Mahatmas and their devotees. This may be one of the reasons why Swamiji later on started Sri Vyasasram near Tirupati. He visited Papavinasanam and other pious places in Tirumala hills. When he went to Gogarbham Cave, the scenic beauty, the stream of fresh water, attracted him very much.

First and foremost he wanted to finish his pilgrimage. So he proceeded towards Arunachala hills, Kanchipuram and

Chidambaram where he saw beautiful temples, but no place for Sadhus to stay and meditate.

Chidambaram was famous for its Paniniya grammar. Saint Nandanar also meditated here and ultimately merged his soul in Siva. So Velappa Swami spent a few days for the study of grammar and meditation. From this place he proceeded to Srirangam, famous for the temple of Sri Ranganatha.

Visit to Sri Subrahmanya Temple and Ramalingeswara Temple.

He went to Palani where Sri Subrahmanyeswara temple was situated. Here he opened one of the holy Ganga water bottles for sprinkling and bathing the Lord's Idol. He was pleased to see devotees being distributed with free food by the rich philanthropists.

He proceeded from Palani to Madura where Devi Meenakshi and Sundareswara were the presiding deities. The last and final pilgrimage was to Rameswaram.

He took bath in the sea where the Indian, Arabian and Bay of Bengal meet. After staying here for three days he proceeded to Kanya Kumari, where the presiding deity was Bhavani. He once again, after finishing his last pilgrimage, went and paid respects to Narayana Guru at Varkala, and then proceeded to meet his own, Guru Sri Sidda Sivagurulinga. Paying homage to his guru narrated everything. After hearing all the news of his pilgrimage the Guru blessed him. Taking leave he went home.

His old father passed away during his absence. His old mother was all alone. He stayed with her to console her by his presence. He stayed for three years, plying between his home and his Guru's Ashram. After his mother picked up her health a bit, without telling any one, he started towards Venkatachala hills.

On his way by foot as his habit was, he visited Kurtalam falls and Ghatigachalam. He visited the wonderful temple of Lord Srikalahasteeswara and Devi Gyana Prasunamba. Ultimately he reached his cherished ideal cave of Gogarbha on 3rd December 1913.

Chapter - 5

MEDITATION

Velappa realised, while touring the whole country, that our people's future and cultural revival depended on Sadhus, preaching of Sanatana Vedanta Dharma.

During this time many national leaders were fighting for the freedom of India. Swamiji's firm conviction was, attaining political freedom was not enough, but should attain internal peace and mental freedom. "Since thousands of years, multitude of people were kept under servility and ignorance in the name of caste and community. Unless our masses are educated in the worldly ways along with our Vedic culture and spiritualtity nothing can be achieved,"

"One should take medicine according to one's illness. When the causes of illness could not be detected any amount of medicine would not help."

"The real cause of our country's downfall was due to the discrimination in the caste system. During the middle ages many interpolations in our Sastras further deteriorated our condition. Small countries like France and England, with very small armies could not have defeated us and consolidated their rule."

The caste system came into existence for division of labour. The intellectuals were supposed to lead the country and the Physically strong to fight and rule, the other categories to do business and labour in the fields. This distribution of work became so rigid it led to the downfall of the nation. The present aim of ours should be to revive the masses by eradicating the caste system and giving the down-trodden and the illiterate along with wordly education, spiritual education." His thoughts were in this strain. So he started to work for the liberation of the masses and the women.

Swamiji was determined to realise Brahman himself before starting any work: "One who is not free can never free others", While

he was meditating, Sanskrit Slokas automatically came to his mind. So also, they say, that the very first Sloka came to Valmiki when his heart was pained at the death of the 'Kroncha' birds. Velappa used to note down these Slokas. As we know he was taking food only once a day, he used to beg for alms in the village of Tirumala. Some times when he was immersed in meditation he was unable to go out for food to the village. Even begging food from house-holders like an ordinary beggar seemed a waste of time. So he even stopped going out for food after some time.

For one who relies on God, not only food, every other thing shall be provided by the all-providing Master. For a few days Velappa used to collect the offerings given to the dead near the village tank, Some times after every one was asleep he would search for remainings and thrown-out food from the kitchen utensils. He always recollects the day he was irritated, when his mother brought food, while he was meditating, threw the plate to the ground. Many a time he repented and thought this was the effect of his mis-behaviour towards his loving mother. Often times Swami used to narrate this episode to his devotees and warned them never to disrespect the food that was offered with love.

Malayala Swami

Many days and months passed as our Swami came to live in the cave. Because Swami hailed from Malayaladesam people not knowing his name, started calling him Malayala Swami. Since when and how this name came into vogue nobody knows, but it stuck to him, Even now Swami is known as Malayala Swami only. Once a devotee named Baba brought a few sweets for Swami in a pot to keep them aside so that whenever he felt hunger he could eat one. Swami ate one such sweet and drank water, but the temptation to eat another came very strong, so he distributed all the sweets among beggars and threw the pot into the rivulet.

Because Swami advanced very much in his spiritual journey the difficulty in getting daily bread never bothered him.

God's Grace

"While I was staying in this cave some of these things happened. Daily I used to pay a visit to the Lord's temple to have his darshan. At that time a high priest named Tiruvenkatacharya, who hailed from Mysore State, used to give me Swami's prasad, which sufficed as my daily food. Once there was unceasing rain for three days. The rivulet near my cave swelled and I was unable to cross it. My habit was not to keep any put nothing with me. Hunger became un-bearable. So prayed to Lord Siva, the saviour of all living beings, with the Sloka from Sivanandalahari.

It was 3 o' clock by the time I was praying. Then a man called Subbaramasetty, a goldsmith who works for the temple came. He told me that he had a dream, where in the merciful Lord asked him to take food to his devotee who was starving. That day there was some Upanayana (thread ceremony) at the Mysore choultry. So he went there, requested for food and brought it to me. He passed on the food tying it to a big bamboo,

After some time the temple authorities under Ramlakhan Das asked me to take my daily food from the temple kitchen itself. This they explained was due to the miracles that happened, hence they were forced to feed me. Why I am reciting all these incidents is to stress the Grace of God and his pity on his devotees. At this time I requested the temple authorities to construct a bridge on this rivulet for which they readily agreed. So, my devotees ! never think that idol-worship is bad. Days passed. I was daily either taking my food from the temple kitchen or from the distributed prasad.

One day I lost touch of time while meditating. It was almost evening, so I went for my food. The men in the kitchen behaved nastily. So I decided never to go there again. "It God sends my food here I shall partake, otherwise I shall fast and die". So thinking I remained in the cave. One day passed. The next day a devotee from Tirupati wanted to offer food to me. While I was meditating he cooked food and was waiting for me to serve. "Those who surrender every thing, their welfare shall be taken care of" are the words Sri Krishna said in Geetha. These

came literally true. As soon as I opened my eyes, the devotee was overjoyed and gave the food"... All this I am narrating only to show how God's grace works intricately."

Days, months passed. Many devotees thronged to see Malayala Swami. Whoever that visited Lord Venkateswara's temple visited Swami also. Many of them brought little offerings of food. As it happened sometimes, Swami would not come out from his deep meditation. It was very difficult to stay there after darkness, because of forest animals. People used to go-back after hanging the offering of packed food to the trees.

Some times the nuisance of the lay people disturbed him so much, he was forced to climb uphill where there were plenty of trees and meditated under them. Later on a mud hut with tree twigs was made to shelter him. His deep meditation swept him into realms of unfathomable spiritual bliss.

Tumbura Theertha (Waterfalls)

There were many waterfalls in the Tirumala hills. The most important among them were Tumbura, Sanakasanandana, Rama-Krishna, Kumara and Vykunta.

Swami used to go to these places temporarily for meditation. Tumbura Theertha was situated in a very beautiful place. It was between two high hills. Only during mid-noon the sun's rays fell there. All the time the melodious sound of the water-fall was like the repetition of 'Ohm'. Even during day time, bears and tigers used to roam there freely. Human beings who take ordinary food cannot stay there, as the water and chill weather are not suitable. The belief was that Narada, the Sage and Tumbura did their meditation there. One can stay in the cave or live under the protruding stones of the hills. Brahmacharis who do penance could only stay in such places.

One day while Swami with the aid of his hand staff was going down to the stream for a bath, he suddenly heard the monkeys making a hell of a noise. While wondering what it was all about he saw a big tiger staring at him. Swami prayed, if it was God's

will, life should end then and there. The tiger roaring stared at him for a few seconds and left of its own accord.

Another time, while the Swami was sitting in deep meditation near a big bush under a tree, a hunter, thinking him to be a tiger twice triggered his gun. But miraculously it did not fire. Third time he was about to fire, suddenly Swami's body moved. Noticing this the hunter ran and prostrated before Swami and prayed for forgiveness. Second time also, God, the all merciful and mighty, rescued him.

While Swami was meditating deeply, Tarigonda Venkamamba, a great saintly lady who passed away a few hundred years back appeared in her astral body and blessed him. It was the same cave where she also meditated.

Many devotees not finding Swami in Gogarbha went in search of him to Tumbura Theertha. A big tiger came roaring towards them. Swamiji asked them not to be afraid and throw stones to make it run away, since many Siddhas (Liberated souls) live in such places. Not only that, these places were the natural habitat of animals, but men were trespassing their domain and solitude. The tiger after drinking water went on its way. There were many types of serpents also in this hilly region, but Swami never allowed any one to harm them. Noninjury to any living being should be the motto, he explained.

The Impact of Ahimsa

Swami once narrated a very interesting story about this time. "I and another sadhu were meditating on the Seshachala hill near Sanakasanandana Theertha. This was situated above the Papanasanam Theertha. A group of wild forest dogs were chasing and about to kill a mother deer and its little one. There were already some bites on its legs from which blood was oozing. The mother and child came to us for protection. Seeing and watching us for a time the wild dogs left. The deer and its little one after resting for a while also left. We wondered at the power of non-violence. If the power of non-violence of such was so great what about the mine of energy that vibrated from great saints like Buddha and Christ, Please do think of this".

Whenever Swami wanted peace of mind he used to spend a few days in Thumbura Thirtha. Daily devotees were bringing Swami plenty of offerings of food. Swami wanted to test himself whether he deserved all this kindness from the devotees. So, without informing any one Swami went away to Thumbura falls for meditation. Devotees who brought food for Swami, not seeing him there thinking that he may be found in Sanakasanandana Thirtha started for that falls. They lost their way and ultimately ended where Swami was. Not knowing Swami previously they requested him to show Malayala Swamit Swami then admitted who he was and praised God for his all-merciful protection. The devotees were overjoyed at this identification, offered the food they brought and left.

People were inquisitive and often questioned about their future and previous births. Swami without any hesitation replied: "What you sowed in your last birth germinated and their effect you see at present. What you are doing now reap their consequences in your next birth. For every thing there is a cause and effect". With this un-expected reply they used to laugh and return back.

Why this Meditation ?

One wise-man questioned Swami what for he was meditating. "Was it for self-liberation or for self-realisation?" Swami instantly replied, "Neither for both. I am a realised soul, so had taken this birth. I want to proclaim to everyone that liberation is their birthright. There may be different tendencies, but none should prevent them, but help to realise. I shall take birth again and again to help my brethern".

Swami always repeated 'Ohm' which helped to attain realisation. Afterwards even this very sound merges in the all-pervading divinity and light. On the northern side of Gogarbha cave there was a big mountain full of trees. Swami used to sit under them and meditate on Ohm. Later on a shed was constructed by devotees, which is under the control of the Venkateswara temple trustee even now.

On the back side of this Kshetrapala hillock, Swami grew a Tulasi garden. Daily this Tulasi was offered as garlands to Lord Venkateswara. Whenever the Lord was taken around in his palanquin he was offered camphor by Swami, for which he put some money as fixed deposit. On the Western side of this Tulasi garden an Aswatha tree was planted and under its shade Venkateswara's divine feet were established for puja, by Swami.

Swami sitting under this tree used to meet devotees, and preach. Days together he meditated under this tree or sit in Tulasi garden which was full of aromatic breeze.

Reformation

Many beggars, and young children were made to beg by their parents, had the dreadful habit of taking hashish etc. Swami requested the temple trustee Ramlakhandas and his employee Lakshminarashimha Rao to start a night school for these children. The school was started and forty children joined. Two teachers were engaged to teach, from 6 P.M. to 8 P.M. in the night and were fed from the temple prasad. The conditions for joining were a few: (1) Daily compulsary attendance (2) Being neat as far as possible. (3) Byhearting daily lessons. (4) Should not engage in smoking or inhaling ganjai. New clothes were distributed. Inspite of all this by the end of four months, only four children remained. The school had to be closed.

Swami started to teach Sanskrit to four kids who already knew some Telugu. Free boarding, lodging, books and clothes were given. Because of the following conditions these fellows also left and started begging from the rich pilgrims. Some of the conditions were, (1) No begging (2) Cleanliness (3) Hospitality towards devotees (4) No purchasing of eatables from shops etc. Even such simple rules they were unable to stick, to Lack of discipline, Swami noticed, in every one.

Kotambedu Math

Kotambedu was the first Ashram that was started after Swami settled at Gogarbha. The circumstances under which this was started are very interesting.

One devotee named Venkata Swami, an actor by profession, was suffering with some throat disease. He was unable to sing or talk. One day he had a dream in which he was blessed by a saint. He started in search of him and ultimately reached Gogarbha. On seeing Swami he realised who blessed him in his dream. After hearing his story Swami blessed and gave Veebhuti, which immediately cured him. He decided to stay back with Swami, but Swami persuaded him other-wise, saying that the climatic conditions of the place does not suit him. He could come and go whenever he felt like paying a visit.

Venkata Swami once again joined his theatre group and started travelling. Once the troup decided to enact a drama in Kotambedu village. Seeing the village Venkataswami was attracted and decided to settle there. He started to teach for his livelihood. In that village there used to live a Sadhu called 'Bodiswami' (Shaven headed Swami). Along with him our teacher used to sing Ballads and Vedanta songs.

As days passed by, the whole village was attacked by acute Cholera. Many children and adults died. Many people left the village with fear of the disease. A man from Venkatagiri paid a visit to this place and was laid up in bed. He was to be removed to his native place. No one came forward. Bodiswami and Venkataswami, being both philosophically bent and service minded, took him to Venkatagiri. But the Villagers refused their re-entrance for ten days.

As there was nothing else to do, both of them paid a visit to Swamiji at Gogarbha. Venkataswami pleaded and pleaded with Swamiji to pay a visit to Kotambedu village as the poor, innocent villagers were devoted and pious.

Swamiji agreed and on the way visited Srikalahasti temple and then went to Kotambedu. There was a dilapitated temple with only a thatched roof, where goats and sheep took shelter which Swami cleaned and stayed. After performing a few Puja'-asked all the people living in gardens and fields to return home. Many returned. Meanwhile welcoming showers of rain came and all returned home. Swami returned to Tirumala hills. Every one was happy at his visit.

Few months later in the same villages hundreds of cattle got an unknown disease and started dying. Once again Venkataswami prayed Malayala Swamiji to pay a visit to their village for which Swami consented. Again, in no time, all the cattle became well. Swami adviced the villagers to reconstruct the temple and donate some land and money for daily worship. They willingly did and Swami installed the deity in the temple for worship. Venkataswami became the priest-cum-teacher.

One Muthu Swami prayed Swami to allow him to stay at Gogarbha, but Swami disuaded and sent him to stay at Kotambedu to relieve the priest-hood of Venkataswami. After this incident another devotee named Paradesi also sought Swami's protection. His health failed due to constant use of drink and norcotics. This habit, he left after staying with Swamiji. He was completely cured and gained health. Swamiji initiated him and asked him also to stay at Kotambedu. There he did severe penance and meditation. Ultimately he passed away after becoming a great sadhu.

Venkataswami was given Sadhu deeksha by Swamiji. His Sadhu name was Parameswaraswami. "God sent you to me. That was why you are called Parameswara", Swami used to say. Parameswara Swami became the right hand of Swamiji in all his works at the Vyasasrama. Paradesi Sadhu's name was Annapurnaswami. This Swami went to Krishna district for spreading Swamiji's ideals. Muthuswami's name was not changed but he was made the priest at Vyasasrama. The village Kotambedu became historic by sending three great devotees to the mother Ashram.

The villagers of Kotambedu secured six acres of land and donated to Swamiji. In 1922 they constructed a building on the banks of the village-tank for his stay, whenever he visited them. After some time the Raja of Venkatagiri filed a suit on Swamiji for not paying the revenue for this land. Later on, coming to know the facts, withdrew the suit and paid the revenue himself. He and his family became great devotees of the Swamiji.

Along with Kotambedu people, many of their friends and relatives also became devotees. Thus Swamiji's devotees increased by leaps and bounds.

Sushka Vedanta Tamo Bhaskaram

During Swamiji's stay at Gogarbha many seekers of truth came to clear their doubts. Swamiji realised during his pilgrimage that even seekers of truth and learned men of scriptures were misled by some so called 'Achala Vedantins'. Character and morality was not a base for spirituality, they propagated. eating and drinking, using narcotics like Opium, Hashish, and Hukka was a common feature. Some of these Guru's even forced their devotees to marry and lead sexual life, convincing that it was essential for spiritual attainment. All these spurious masters instead of leading their students to higher regions of spirituality actually deprived them of their money and other worldly things. There were others who, posing as great scholars, lectured and imposed strictures and orders on women and other castes, far excommunication the all study of Geeta or meditation on Ohm. Perceiving these disturbing circumstances Swami wrote his book named True Knowledge, or Sushka Vedanta Tamo Bhaskaram. Swami became an adept in Telugu language by this time. On reading this book, thousands, apart from appreciating it, became his staunch supporters.

During this period Swami also wrote Venkateswara Puja Pancharatnamala and Dyanamruta. 'True Knowledge' not only brought a spiritual up-heaval, but also a social renaissance and revolution. A few so called pandits repented and prayed for pardon. Swami pleaded, because of the suppression of the masses and exploitation, the whole nation had to suffer. It is the reason for our degradation, which also paved the way for foreign oppression. Division of labour came according to the mental capacity and aptitude of men and not by birth. According to our Sanatana Dharma the divinity of the soul is accepted. Every soul is the same. Only the physical appearance differs according to climate and country. By not preaching this fraternity of all human beings and the innate divinity, all these calamities are heaped on our country. We have to enrich the masses by educating them. "So, brethern, try to love every one and establish the domain of the Lord here". Thus, the Swami argued and wrote. The special place of this book in the spiritual advancement has to be admitted. Swami once for all established his spiritual supremacy.

Strong Determination

Malayala Swami had become well-known. Many devotees came from far and near. Apart from feeding spiritual food, food for their hunger had also to be taken care of. Many devotees contributed for this purpose. After feeding the devotees Swami used the remaining amount for the printing of the books. Some of his devotees went to South Africa to settle. A huge amount of three hundred rupees was sent by money order to Swami by these South African devotees. Swami was requested to come personally to take delivery of the money. Swami determined never to leave the Gogarbha cave under any circumstance. He sent word to the post master, to send the money through the postman, if not, to return the money order. So in the end the post master personally delivered the money. Thus Swami stood by his word never to stir out of the place from where he was living.

Dissatisfaction – Divine Call

Though immersed in writing and giving discourses, Swamiji never neglected meditation. But inspite of all this activity there was no perfect peace of mind or complete joy or unabated happiness. Swami after self-introspection could not trace any reason for this lack of perfect peace and joy.

Ultimately he analysed his life, details of meditation, and every other thing. He decided to commit suicide if full realisation would not come in three more days, either by falling from the mountain or by hanging or by taking poison.

An inner voice said, "All the hours, days, years of meditation should not be counted. Sixty minutes of complete super-consciousness only count as one hour of meditation. Such sixty minutes count as an hour and such twenty four hours make a day. Unless and until there are twelve years of such full superconsciousness you cannot merge your consciousness and become one with all-pervading super-consciousness. All the other years of sadhana do not count". Swami was very happy at this revelation. Since then he used to count the months and years of his deep and complete enlightenment, in meditating state. Thus

three years elapsed. The un-bounded joy, the unequalled happiness, he was unable to recite in words. His only wish was fulfilled. He realised the meaning of "Aham Brahmasmi". "Esava samidam" i.e. 'I am it', "The all-pervading is also in me and every where".

The Inner Meaning of Pilgrimage to Tirupati

Swamiji after achieving what he wanted, wished to spend the rest of his time to serve devoted souls to realise themselves. Who ever came to him with spiritual hunger he was giving superb feast of philosophy.

"The Seven Hills are the seven spiritual planes or hurdles in our minds. Crossing this gross plane is like stout people climbing the first steep hill. They can do so with the help of a carrier called 'doli'. A human being surrounded and immersed in worldly affairs has to take the help of the Godly men. Once this is done, climbing of all the other six hills or conquering all other mental planes is easy. The black hair we offer at the feet of the Lord by shaving our head Is removing the evil instincts present from the womb. After shaving our heads we take a dip in the tank and wear yellow dress. All the three gunas-Tamas, Rajas and Satva i.e. the lazy, active and good instincts are of no avail to attain God-hood. During this time, like Venkateswara, who left his spouse to practice, sent Sri Padmavati down hills. Strict brahmacharya is needed". In this way Swamiji used to explain the meaning of the Pilgrimage to Tirupati.

Advice Given to Devotees

These are some of the advices Swami gave to his devotees at that period.

1. Without hurting others one should earn his livelihood. His daily routine should be punctual. If he succeeds in this he shall succeed in every work he undertakes in his life.

2. When you hurt others, your time shall come. The same shall be reapeed by you.

3. As we keep time for earning, so we should set apart time for prayer and meditation.

4. Food earned through bad means is like poison. Dried pieces of bread and water are better than this unholy food.

5. Even a realised soul should live piously, eat only to live and think holy thoughts. If not he is a deceiver of God and Guru and becomes a hypocrite.

6. Discrimination of caste led to the downfall of man and country.

7. One who immerses in sensual pleasures can never go near God.

8. So is true of God loves, who can never go near sensual pleasures.

9. Non-voilence, Truth, Inner purity are the essentials for Sanyasin's life.

10. Un-truth by truth, voilence by non-voilence, indolence by activity, fire by water, should be counteracted.

11. Love replaces cruelity, light displaces darkness, sacrifice eradicates avarice and kindness defeats discrimination.

Such were the pearls he distributed to his devotees.

Gathering of Followers (Seishyas)

Annapurna Swami and Parameswara Swami started living with Swami in Gogarbha cave. Parameswara Swami lived with Swami for a few years even after Vyasasrama was started. Later on he went away to a place called Sivagiri at the foot of Diguva Magham hills in Chittoor district. Annapurna Swami started Annapurna Math at Masulipatnam in Krishna district, which did yeomen service in spreading Swami's precepts and ideals.

Some of his other devotees were, Rajayya, his personal attendant. Venkateswara Swami was the manager of the Ashram. Finances of the Ashram were taken care of by Govinda Swami, who was a selfless soul. Udayagiri Ramayya and Menthi Subbayya and his father were responsible for bringing Swami to Kasibugga where the Ashram was founded. Sayam Varadadasu with his poetic talents and songs spread Swami's message. Karunyananda, founder of Jeevakarunya Sangham at Rajahmundry, Venkatappa, the messenger of Swami's in Chittoor District were a few more devotees not to mention others. There were many political leaders and writers like Naganarya.

Sri Sadhu Matha, personification of piety and sacrifice, was the founder of Stree Sadhu Math of Veerabhadrapuram at Rajahmundry. She paid a visit to Gogarbha and Swami presented the Sanyasin's garments to her. Till then she was wearing only yellow dress.

Near Iruvaram village in Chittoor district there was a cave named Gundayya. Here Yogini Ramanamma used to meditate. In Nellore district near Kanapartipadu, Dattatreya Ashram was founded by one saintly lady Seshamma. All these accepted Swami as their Guru after paying a visit to him.

Descending the Tirumala Hills

Certain circumstances led Swami to descend the Tirumal hills and start an Ashram in another place.

The temple priests became jealous. Immaterial of any one's caste Swami admitted them as his devotee. Another cause wss they gave donations for Swami to feed the needy and for printing his publications. Swamiji was meditating late into the morning or some time into the evening. People not sure of his appearance used to go and pay visit to him and then visit Lord Venkteswara who was ever available in the temple.

The anger and bile of the priests was at its highest, since Swami published, "Sri Venkateswara Puja Pancha Ratnamala". This book gave admission to every one to perform the puja of the Lord by themselves. People started calling Swami as the living God Venkateswara.

All the above reasons led to tale-telling to the Chief Mahant against Swami. Though the Mahant did not fully believe all these cock and bull stories, he was convinced that it would be better for the temple's treasury if he left the place permanently.

Swami and his devotees were put to many difficulties. The devotees wanted to retort, but Swami persuaded them not to do so.

Ultimately Swami was sent a letter not to reside in the cave any more but to shift his residence to a temple garden.

His decision to leave the hills was made aleady. To put it to practice came now. Swami after sending messages to his devotees prepared to leave.

On 3-6-1926, which according to Hindu Almanac, was Akshaya year, Vaisaka month, 7th day of new noon and Thursday. He left with seven or eight devotees like Venkateswara Swami, Parameswara Swami, Muthuswamy, with loads of books on their heads and started down. Swami persuaded them to leave heavy burden of books in another devotees home.

Thousands of people came to give Swami a send off. With tears they took leave of him. He sent word to the temple chief store keeper that he was leaving that place permanently. This store keeper was a great admirer of Swami. He also gave send-off with a heavy heart.

Swami, coming down, took a bath along with his devotees in Kapilateertha. Thousands of people welcomed Swami with band and music. Swami was offered food along with his followers by a woman devotee. Surrounding villagers also came in thousands to pay their homage to Swami.

Chapter – 6

ESTABLISHMENT OF SREE VYASASRAMA

The day Swami came to the foot of Nandi Hill was the day the Ashram came into existence. This place was in a forest. Animals used to drink water from the tank called Kurma Theertha situated in it. The day Swami came was Ashada Sudda Ekadasi.

The piety and purity of this land was recorded in Sivapurana. A saintly woman named Japala meditated here.

Near the Kasi Bugga his followers built two cottages, namely, Puja Mandir and Nishtasrama. Now this Nishtasrama became Swami's Adhisthana Mandir. Puja Mandir is still preserved as it was.

The Raja of Sri Kalahasti, Sri Kumara Venkatalingam donated the land for the ashram and registered it in the year 1926.

Swami sent letters to all his followers informing them of his new establishment. Not only his followers, many other new people came to visit Swami. There were no facilities to stay there for his devotees; so Swami sent Parameswara Swami and others to stay at Annapurna Ashram at Masula.

When Swami descended there were only six hundred rupees with him. Later on many farm lands were purchased with the donations given by the public. The yearly yield from these lands was sufficient for the Ashram activities.

Prevention of Animal Sacrifice

Under a big tree in the Ashram, every year, the villagers used to sacrifice animals to the Goddess. Swami convinced most of hem about the futility of these sacrifices, but there were still at few who staunchly protested. They wanted to sacrifice at any cost. Then Swami's followers came forward and put their heads on the cutting board. Then the villagers were forced to stop their hideous act.

Swami explained that killing animals in the name of sacrifice was sacrilegious. The all-merciful Mother Goddess never wants her children to die nor she wants to drink their blood. Only ignorant people believe in such atrocious deeds. As education and intelligence advances it improves culture. People stopped sacrificing men, still some kill animals, but they are not evolved souls.

Swami also advocated vegetarianism as it helps concentration. The same point he stressed in his book Sushkavedanta Tamo Bhaskaram. By observation we can findout the fact that even in animals only some are carnivorous, others are not, so is also true of birds.

Pretending as Rajayogis some people wear Rudraksha's and ochre robes deceiving themselves, deceive others.

Some who have arguing ability persuade good people from their path. "Why did God create all these animals if not for our pleasure ? We can drink and eat as we like. Marry and still attain realisation. I am an example," thus they persuade people.

Along with the purity of food, pious living and abstinence, one attains spiritual progress. Because of Swami's persuasion many house-holders also became vegetarians. In many places animal sacrifice was discarded. Sayam Varada Das even wrote a book called 'The Flower of Ahimsa' to persuade people to opt non-violence.

Curing of Diseases and Dispelling of Evil Spirits

Swami possessed spiritual powers even during his stay at Gogarbha. We know how he visited Kotambedu and cured cholera and some diseases of the cattle.

Many suffering from unknown diseases and in the clutches of evil spirits, came to Swami for Vibhuti and holy water. These instantly cured them. Even doctors were surprised at this great power of Swami. Day by day, group after group, was coming for Swami's miraculous touch and cure.

Swami realised that if he continued physical and mental cure, the very aim and purpose of the Ashram shall be defeated. "One day or other the physical body has to fall, so there is no use of wasting one's powers", so thinking he prayed God to stop the spiritual powers. After that he refused to cure any one.

Swami knew a few medicines which keep the body strong for hundreds of years like "Kaya Kalpa" which leads to the love of the body. He never practiced these, he said.

Yadartha-Bharati — Monthly

"In these modern days the place of magazines and journals cannot be under-estimated. Since a long time I have been requesting the editors of various journals to publish spiritual essays, but it was of no avail. So I decided to run a monthly called "Yadartha-Bharati" which means the Glory of Truth. All intelligent people at one time or other wonder about this Nature, its Creator and its real relationship with that Creator. What was revealed to Rishis during their meditation they gave us. These eternal truths are to be spread among true seekers of truth. All these and many other precepts of our religion shall be published in this monthly," wrote Swami in a pamphlet and sent for distribution.

In February 1927 the first issue of Yadartha-Bharati came out with Kasibhatla Krishnaraya Sastri as the editor and honorary secretary. Many patrons and donors came forword for the monthly.

Prayers of all Gods and Goddesses, Upanishats, the life stories of great saints, criticism of spiritual books, Swami's and others' lectures were some of the subjects that were published. Many great criticisms on books were serialised and then published in book form. Since then till today this monthly is being published without any interruption. Except one or two monthlies like Peace and Shanti, published by Omkarswami and Divyajnana Deepika, there were no other spiritual monthlies.

Sanatana Dharma Samajams

Swami was convinced that without freedom of thought and spiritual awakening, political freedom does not help the country. He called all his followers and devotees to form a society of spiritual service and asked them to meet every year in one place and conduct conventions and symposia. In Northern India Rama-Krishna Math, and Theosophical Society were rendering service in the field of spirituality. There was dearth of such societies, especially in South India and that too in Andhra. So the first "Sanathana Dharma Paripalana Seva Samaj" was formed. The first conference was called in 1926 at Palachur, Kalahasti taluq, under the leadership of Uggumudi Subba Reddi. Many people attended this conference and spiritual leaders of many religious sects gave lectures. Swami gave the aim of this convention thus :

1. To search for truth, to realise truth and make others to lead this path.

2. To know and find out what real Dharma is, to walk and make others walk in this path.

3. To search the cause of sorrow, to eradicate it in one self and also in others.

All the days were filled with Bhajans, prayers, discourses, Harikathas and commentaries on Upanishads, Geeta etc.

Inspired by the success of these meetings, the villagers of Aravapalem, named Linga Reddi, Venkatasubba Reddi, Vasudeva Reddi and Posa Reddi came forward to conduct another conference.

Conference at Aravapalem

The second conference was convened in April 1928. Nearly ten thousand devotees from Krishna, Godavari districts and nearby places attended. Food and lodging was par-excellence. Sayam Varada Das, with his poetic and musical talents, shook the people to their very roots. He convinced them about the necessity of mercy and love to the animals nothing to say about our own mankind.

Swami, addressing the gathering said, "Many devotees who visited and helped me during my stay at Gogarbha now stopped coming. They are under the impression that a lone life is the true life of a Sanyasi. Why I meditated was to prepare myself for this life of service. Attaining freedom for one's soul is selfishness. Why did Saints and Rishis wrote books on Yoga, Grammar, medicine etc.? Is it not for the benefit of the ordinary man of the world? God himself personifies and comes down to uplift mankind whenever there is necessity ! You may question whether I am as great as that, but I question you, can an elephant and an ant equal in their work? I may be an ant, but like it I have a role to play".

There are a few who say what has saintly people to do with service. Those who did not either serve in gurukulas or read true philosophy utter such words. Service done without desire for its fruit is advised in all sastras. Serving humanity is serving "God."

These meetings were conducted for three days. The second day was allotted for women speakers. Damaraju Lakshmamma presiding, conducted it. People were surprised at this bold attempt and attributed it all to Swami's greatness.

One incident of this time we have to record here. On hearing about Swami's conference, Rev. C. W. Ober Barfer, along with his mission devotees, paid a visit to the place of the meeting. Swami and the Reverend spoke on the precepts of their mutual religions. The Reverend spoke in the meeting about the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. There were many muslims also who attended these meetings. All with one voice repeated Ohm. Swami expressed his love of Lord Jesus since his childhood. The Christian brethren and Hindu brethren sat together and ate together. Tears of joy incessantly flowed from the spectators' eyes.

With great enthusiasm the people of Annamedu invited Swami to their village to celebrate Lord Sankara's birthday by non-stop feeding of the poor. People were filled with Swami's spiritual food and poor were satisfied with physical food. Every thing ended in great success.

Conference at Pamarru

In the year 1929 on March 25th, a full moon day in the month of Phalguna and the year Vibhava, the third convention was called by Pamarru residents of Krishna District. Since then every year for three days the conference without fail was being convened.

Fifteen thousand people, out of which five thousand were women, attended this conference. Koti Reddy, Kola Ramaswamy and Thamma Venkatadri were the Chief Organisers. Swamy Tatvananda, Duggirala Balarama Krishnayya, Paramahamsa of Gandikota, Satyananda Yogeswara and Pranavananda were the prominent speakers. Sadhu Matha of Rajahmundry Women's Math along with her followers attended which attracted many admirers.

Swamiji explained in the meeting what Sanatana Dharma was. He said, "Every human being's birthright is religion, of ours."

1. This is Sanatana Dharma, which makes no distinction of sex, caste and community. Helping others to lead a spiritual life and not to hinder them in the name of the above is Sanatana Dharma,

2. The castes have come into existence according to the division of labour. Whoever is pious and truthful is entitled to this domain. Unless and until the subconscious instincts, desires and impulses are eradicated one cannot achieve eternal liberation. This again is eternal truth.

3. One who rises above good and bad, sorrow and happiness, and all other dualities and serves the Guru with absolute faith shall attain eternal bliss.

4. When one immerses in supra-mental consciousness, or when one forgets one's self in serving others, or when one looses one's consciousness in meditation, then understand, it is Sanatana Dharma.

5. Hear the gospels with one ear, with the other the piteous cries of the downtrodden suffering humans. Earn money well and

spend in good and kind acts. Run to hear philosophical speeches and earn wisdom, discrimination and with the same enthusiasm spread wisdom and discrimination.

6. The water in different kinds of metal vessels reflects the sun's rays in different colours. But the sun is the same, so think the eternal as the sun and the individual souls as the metal vessels.

7. Whoever you are, whatever is your sex and caste, if you are kind, self-righteous and if you are truth seeker, you ere entitled to study all the Sastras and practice all penances.

Another fact, my brethren, is we spend millions of rupees on building temples in the South and do not take care of the truth-seekers. So, many of these souls are forced to go to Haridwar and Rishikesh for their stay, where the weather does not suit them. The Northerners utilise money for the service of these Sadhus. We waste on buildings.

You may question why we should feed these Sadhus that roam about doing nothing for their livelihood ? Do not think all Sadhus and mendicants are so. What do you say of Sri Ramakrishna who led thousands of people in his spiritual path ? Ramanuja, Madhvacharya, Shankara, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad and modern saints like Swami Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswathi were all Sadhus ?

Time and tide wait for no man. Stop the exodus of the saintly persons to North in India. Make hay while the sun shines. Help to start Ashrams and automatically everything follows."

Nellatur Conference

The fourth conference was held in 1930 March at Nellatur in Nellore district. [illegible] Venkatramayya, Tondamanadu Polayya Naidu and [illegible] were the Chief organisers. Nearly fifteen thousand people among them five thousand being women, attended. Saraswati [illegible] at Madras, Sri Sadhu Swami presided on one day and [illegible] Venkata Subba Reddi of Gudur Taluq Board President, presided on another day.

In this convention Swami explained, Karma, Bhakti, Gyana and Dhyana Yogas and the under-lying unity in their diversity. Further he propagated, "There is no need of starting many different societies. As it is, our country is divided into sects and sub-sects. Unless you set free those under you, you yourself can never become free. This is a natural law. Unification of all religions is not possible but love unites every one. What we want is a universal religion and world unity.

As political freedom is one's birth right, so also is spiritual freedom. As there are certain ways for political fighting, so also there are certain rules of obedience in spiritual war. So let us not hesitate to proclaim to the world at large the greatness of our Dharma. A small animal, the squirrel, helped Sri Rama to the best of its ability. So, do service to the best of your ability.

During the student days, boys and girls should be taught Sanskrit. After their education if they want to accept the householder's duties they can do so, if not they can take up the spiritual life of a Sanyasin.

All these societies should reform men, not for their physical cleanliness, but for inner purity".

Rajahmundry Conference

In the year 1931, Rajahmundry came forward to conduct these religious meetings. One Sri Kotta Venkata Ratnam wrote about this conference thus :

"Sadhu Mata of Veerabhadrapuram Women's Math, Shanti-Ashram founder Sri Omkarswami, and Rajeswarananda Swami presided. The great poet laureate, Sripada Krishnamurti Sastri, politician and reformers like Nyapati Subbarao Pantulu and Chitrapu Venkatachalam and many others spoke. Smt. Nandivada Seshamma wrote beautiful poems on Swami, as the personification of God himself, who came down to eradicate the caste and community discripancies.

It should be mentioned for the first time a lady named Korasikha Kamamma along with Puchipudi Gangayya took the organisation of these meetings and successfully conducted them.

Swami explained Sankhyayoga : "The mind is so subtle it deceives even great men. This subtle maya may be compared to a giant. It has fooled many a wise-man. Saints have fought this pretentious wisdom. One has to detect it by all the four Yogas. It evades and escapes. So beware of this giant. All the inner and outer pieties are the various tools of our fight. I have pity on you, O! demon and deceit of maya ! It is not like the olden days. If you were defeated in the West by Christ with his all pervading love, you ran away to Arab countries. There again, Mohammad fought you, so you came to our land. Here also your net could not be spread as Buddha, the personification of mercy came. But somehow you are once again trying to spread your tentacles. But we are all united now, whatever our caste, community and creed is, we shall fight and kill you. Only one caste fought you in old days. Now you cannot escape. The religion of love, truth, freedom, peace, of all pervading and permeating God is spreading",. Swami spoke with so much emotion, thousands heard and were inspired.

Sripada Krishnamurthi Sastri, the poet and a few others came to criticise and debate with him, but later on, on hearing Swamiji's wonderful expounding of Upanishads and other Yogas admitted his supremacy. Krishnamurthi Sastri even went to the extent of writing Sanskrit slokas on Swami, praising him. From this time the great poet became an ardent admirer of Swami. He even presided over a meeting of Swami at Podur, West Godavary district in 1937. He lectured thus; "To whatever community one may belong, if he has the disdinct qualities of a Guru he must be revered. So Sankara accepted the lowest of low, a Chandala, as his Guru. Gurus may come according to the necessity of the times in many places; in many communities. First, I did not like Swami, but after hearing him I was completely changed. This kind of acceptance was difficult for people like me. Admiring his great qualities I have written poems in Sanskrit. Now I request Swami to give his kind permission to dedicate my book Bhagavat Geeta to him".

What more was needed than such men being converted ? Ultimately this "Sanatana Dharma Paripalana Seva Samaj' came to be called *'Sanatana Vedanta Gyana Sabha'*.

Swami changed the name of these yearly meetings. "Many mis-understood the meaning of Sanatana in the Society's name. The educated who believed in reform were against the very name Sanatana, which meant it is only for Brahmins. They misunderstood thinking this society was originated only for the uplift of Brahmins. So Swami had to change the name.

Are the Castes Very Old ?

Inspite of change in name of the society, the word *Sanatana* was not removed by Swami. He gave his reasons thus: "What is eternal only can be called Sanatana. Except the soul which never changes and is eternal, every other thing changes. Changes come according to times. A young one becomes old. A Hindu converts into a Christian. An un-married man becomes a Sanyasin. Under any circumstances that which does not change and static is eternal. So why should we not keep '*Sanatana*' to our society? Because what we want to establish is this eternal religion.

The gold is created by God, but man makes many different Jewels. The metal is the same, but the sculptor makes different dieties out of it. So men may be different but the inherent divinity is the same. Who knows this truth is the real Gyani? Only one underlying truth permeates and pervades every one and every thing. Who understands this only should be called a Sanyasin. All others are people who live in nature or under Maya.

The downfall of our religion is due to the discrimination in castes. If a low born sincerely tried to uplift himself, the so-called Sanatanists never extended a helping hand. But today any man who educates himself in English schools, immaterial of their community, are respected and allowed to enter any temple or house.

Changes have to be made according to times. If not revolutions and internal wars are sure to come. Study the history of Russia, Germany etc. If wearing certain dress and keeping the hair in a certain style is *Sanatanism*, then such people are to be laughed at. If the steering of the running train is in our hands, it can be taken in which ever direction we want. Otherwise no use of breaking our heads". All these revolutionary lecturers inspired many thousands of people. Many women, started studying Geeta, Upanishads etc.

After these meetings were over, Swami used to go to interior villages for propaganda and then return to the Ashram after two months or so. During these tours thousands of copies of Swami's books were sold.

Sanskrit School

Without mastering Sanskrit it is very difficult to understand the Gospels of our religion. Many communities were prevented from its perusal, so much so Sanskrit scholars became scarce. After the advent of English schools even the so called forward communities neglected Sanskrit studies. Sanskrit was discarded, and is called the dead language. Swami realising all these facts, started a school even while he was at Gogarbha cave.

After Aravapalem conference in the year 1928, Swami published in his monthly that he wanted to establish a Sanskrit School.

On 2nd September 1928, Sunday, with the name 'Arsha Vidyalaya' the school's foundation was laid. Without any discrimination many students were admitted. Free books and fees were given. A few paid for boarding but the rest were given free boarding and lodging. Unexpectedly Sri Kasi Krishnamacharya and others attended this opening ceremony.

The credit of opening this Sanskrit school goes to only Swami and Swami alone. Many old students of this school are now highly placed as lecturers, teachers and are in other positions. Some have even gone to Benaras for further studies in Sanskrit. So Swami's long standing wish of all castes and communities studying Sanskrit was fulfilled.

Sanskrit Education

Though a few students of all communities joined the school, many non-brahmins were not availing this opportunity. So

Swami wrote an article in his monthly. "Dear brethren souls! Sanskrit is the mother tongue for all other vernaculars in India. All our languages have many Sanskrit words and derivations. All our Vedas, religious books and even day to day prayers and mantras are in Sanskrit. If one's religion dies, one's culture dies. A nation without culture has no place in this world. These men are no better than animals.

When Hindu Kings ruled this land, Sanskrit was at its highest glory. As time elapsed due to one reason or other interpolations came and ordinary people were not only denied Sanskrit education, but they were also cruelly punished for small acts of omission and commission. Even Manudharma Sastra has these inter-polations. Without discrimination we have taken these for granted. Only King Ashoka did his utmost to eardicate these differences of castes and creeds. Now, due to God's grace, the time has arrived when every one is entitled to Sanskrit studies. If you do not avail this golden opportunity, are the Brahmins to be blamed? All these years we were blaming the higher castes, so, awake arise and avail." With this inspiration many girls and boys joined the school.

By 30th October, 1935, the number of grownup girls increased. Many Ashram woman devotees also wanted to persue Sanskrit studies. Swami started a separate girls school for all these grownup women. Some of the elderly woman complained that at that stage of life it was very hard for them to study. Sanskrit was like a hard nut and they were unable to learn. But Swami encouraged them. "As an un-used Harmonium would not sound well, so also owing to lack of daily practice even our voice and mind rusts" he would say. He further explained to them, "Put hard work in the beginning, you progress and master the language. With the help of your teachers, you must be able to understand Sanskrit works. Many people enchanted with English studies and the remuneration they get for jobs neglect Sanskrit. Even pandit families instead of teaching their children, are encouraging their kids to take to English education. What wonder is there if after some time we all lose our great Sanskrit treasures?"

"Foreigners like Maxmuller did yeoman service to Vedas, by writing commentary on them. The difference between foreigners and Indians is that they discern and discriminate, criticise and then only believe, which we absolutely lack.

Mere Sanskrit learning does not make men spiritual or pious. We have to cultivate yearning for search of truth. If love of truth was there in us we would not have had this downfall. This discrimination between sexes, communities and denial of education to masses are the causes of this rotten condition". Swami wrote thus as girls from Ashram school were denied admission in Sanskrit College at Tirupati and other institutions. One Chenchu Subbamma who passed all the examinations with credit was denied a seat. After the recommendation of the higher authorities she was admitted ultimately.

Swami with such high aims, ideals and aspirations, exhorted every one to study the Sanskrit language.

The Last Ashrama i.e. Sanyasa

Swami started wearing the ochre robes of the Sanyasins only from February 1936. He was till then always wearing white khadi.

Many of the followers of Malayala Swami went as mendicants or students to Nothern India. They were questioned about their Guru and Ashram, before they were given shelter or food in their respective Maths. When they heard that their Guru was not a Sanyasin, the Mahamandaleswaras looked down on these students and some even refused to give them shelter. Many of these devotees returned to Swami and repeated their difficulties and requested Swami to take to ochre robes for their sake.

Swami said in reply: "There are three types of sanyas, one physical, second mental and last is desireless state of Sanyasa. A Guru can take to any of these Sanyasas. If every one starts wearing ochre clothes without sacrificing desires and physical comrorts, they are to be considered as deceivers and nothing else. This is one of the reasons why we have become the laughing stock to the educated."

But ultimately the followers persuaded Swami to take to Sanyasa for their protection, which he took on Monday, 2nd February 1936.

He invited his colleague in Siddasivalinga Guru Ashram, Sri-Shankarananda Yateeswara to present ochre robes after the rituals were over.

Swami did not want any one of his various followers to know about his 'Sanyasa Sweekara', so asked his Ashramites not to let any one know about this. Only intimate followers like Sri Sadhu Matha were invited.

Swami and Shankarananda Swami went to Sri Kalahasti, took their bath in the river Suwarna Mukhi and after Lord's darshan returned back.

Next day was Ekadasi. On that day after all the rituals of oblations, offerings and Homa were over, Swami took to the Sanyasa Ashram. His only prayer to God was to make him more than deserve this Sanyasin's robes and to earn name and fame, like Adi Shankara.

Thus for the sake of his followers Swami took to Sanyasa Ashram.

Sayam Varada Das

Varada Das was an adept in music and was also a poet. So he used his artistic talents in spreading Swami's message of non-violence to every nook and corner of Andhra. He belonged to Kondamachupura Village in Cuddapah District. During his early days he was a staunch congress worker and went to jail also. His book 'Swarajya Dhanka' gained a lot of popularity. After meeting Swami he devoted his whole life to Swami's service.

Swami authorised him to go all over Andhra along with his wife to spread his message. Especially he was asked to tour Nellore District, In some of the places he enthused people to start new Samajams and Service societies. This news was also published in Yadartha-Bharati.

Hearing his "Ahimsa Pushpam" many a man and woman converted themselves as vegetarians. He has many books to his credit. With the consent of Swamiji he also becamae Sanyasi with the name "Sri Parabrahmananda Giri". While travelling some where near Calcutta, he suddenly passed away, in the year 1937.

Drama of the Deceivers

The world is full of deceivers. After the publication of Varada Dasu's tour, many rogues in the garb of Malayala Swami's followers, started collecting funds in the Ashram's name. A few wisemen wrote for clarification and discovered the duplicity. In 1927 October issue of Yadartha Bharati a notification was put, "Without proper receipt, Ashram treasurer's signature, no one should subscribe money to any one that collects in the name of Ashram".

Though this prevented the miscreants for some time, once-again letters came to Swami stating very interesting facts. Posing as Swami's followers, some fellows were distributing, amulets, herbs and roots and are deceiving illitirates, some posing as welwishers who came from the Ashram, collected money for their return journey in 1938. Two women near Visakhapatnam villages stole money and disappeared. All these facts were published and requested people to be careful of such rogues.

Growth of the Ashram

The Ashram improved by leaps and bounds. The school building was constructed with the help of donars like Kondapalli Punnamma and Mallidi Mahalakshmamma. Krishna Puja Mandir was also built by Kotha Venkata Ratnam Zamindar. One Mr. Punnayya visited the Ashram in the year 1928 and wrote his impressions thus: "On seeing this Ashram I was reminded of the descriptions of the age old Ashrams of the Rishis of Puranic times. The discourses and prayers attracted me very much. Swami reminds me of Sri Vyasa himself".

Again in 1923 Shanker Sharma of Mallacheruvu wrote, "Since the time I got hold of Swami's publications, I was pining for his darsan. I felt blessed and happy at the very sight of this great saint, who seems to be the very personification of love and truth".

Haridwar Mandaleswara's Visit

Swamis and Mandaleswaras that visited Tirupati paid a visit to the Ashram. Among them was a great Sanskrit Scholar of Kankal, Haridwar, Sri Maheswarandaji. On his way to the South Indian pilgrimage he came to Tirupati and Sri Kalahasti. After these visits he came to the Ashram on 10-12-1938. He and Swami conversed in Sanskrit, and he delivered his discourse in the same language. He praised the Sanskrit school and the Ashram very much, saying that these equalled in par-excellance to any other Ashram in Haridwar. Some one questioned him the propriety of woman being inducted into sanyasa. As an answer, he gave many instances of women being Sanyasins and writers.

Chapter - VII

PROPAGATION OF SPIRITUAL EDUCATION ; TOURS AND MEETINGS; MUVVA CONFERENCE

On March 1932, as usual, Muvva village in Krishna District made elaborate arrangements for the yearly Conference. Just two days before, Swami received an order from the government not to attend the meetings. Government for no reason what so ever became suspicious of Swami. By that time all the arrangements were made, invitations sent. So without Swami's presence the conference went on' but people were very much disappointed. Thorough search of the Ashram was made. Swamiji was advocating Swaraajya i. e. spiritual freedom. May be the government equalled it with Swaraajya movement.

In 1932 one devotee donated ten thousand rupees to Swami. An Ashram named 'Omkara Ashram was founded in Tenali and Tapasyananda was made the president there. Swami advocated on this occasion: "To spread and propagate our Sanatana Dharma we have to start many an Ashram, where students can learn Sanskrit, can practice the precepts, and meditate. Ultimately this paves the way for their Sanyasin's life. My mission in life is this".

Thus Swamiji was able to found the following Ashrams at Vijayawada, Pamarru, Masulipatnam, Tadepalli, Devarakota, Gantasalapalem, Kantheru and Seethanagaram etc.

Meeting Gandhiji

When Gandhiji was visiting Masulipatnam, Swamiji also happened to go there. Swami Tattvananda and Sayam Varada Dasu made it possible for Swami to meet Gandhiji at Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sita Ramayya's home. Swami was overjoyed at meeting Gandhiji. Gandhiji also expressed his pleasure at meeting Swami. He requested Swamiji to help him in his work. Swami smilingly replied that he is working his way for Swaarajya.

Swamiji regarded Gandhiji as an avatar. Though Swamiji was working towards the spiritual enlightenment of women and the masses, we should not forget he was an out and out patriot. All the Ashramites and his followers including Swami were wearing only Khadi. During the Chaturmasya Vrata, he made devotees to spin on the Charka.

In 1933 the Seventh Vedanta Sabha was conducted at Yerrapalli village in Chittoor District which was stricken by drought. As the meetings were progressing heavy rain with gale came. The Pendal where the meeting was going on came down, but none were harmed. The people rejoiced at this God-sent rain as a miracle of Swami's presence.

Ungutur Meeting Foes-Turned Friends

In the year 1936, in Ungutur village in Krishna District nearly twenty thousand people attended when there were no facilities for travel. Along with three days conference another four days were added. Discourses, Harikathas, Satyanarayana Pujas, Bhajans and mela were arranged.

Swami perceiving this big crowd called the organisers and said 'I know what regard you have for me, but I request you not to inconvenience these people who have come to see me from distant places." Nearly one hundred and fifty people served this big crowd for seven days by giving them food and shelter.

Here was an instance of Swami s forgiveness and fortitude. A youth named Subba Reddi belonging to the Congress, with a party of youth, who made a hell of a noise fought the devotees and called Swami all sorts of names, calling him an imposter who deceived people for his personal gains. Many of the audience wanted to teach him a lesson, but a few also sided him. In midst of all this Swami never said a word against any one nor lost his patience and temper.

This same Subba Reddi after four years became the staunch supporter of Swamiji. He not only prayed for pardon, but wrote

a book on Swami with the Title "Asangananda Goutama Buddha." Let us now see what he has written in that book. "The forgiveness of our Swami may be compared to Goutama Buddha's forgiveness of Chandu, the sinner who gave him pork to eat. I have seen with my own eyes how Swami pardoned the man who left the Ashram, went astray, married, then repented and came back to the old fold. Another instance I witnessed in 1940. A robber, who after meeting Swami begging for a place for his livelihood as penance. The last but not the least is my case when I fought Swami in 1936 at Ungutur, but completely converted by his love and grace by 1940."

One lady named Mangamma invited Swami in the year 1930 to a village near Nayudupeta for the dedication of Sri Rama temple. The villagers welcomed Swami with band. A Vaishnava Swami grew jealous and scolded the woman devotee. While he was going to another village an utter stranger going into ecstacy scolded him saying : "You fool, you have insulted my devotee, so you deserve punishment", So saying he struck him with his slippers.

On another occasion when Swami went to Vellore some Saivite Jangams attacked Swami with their arguments. Swami without being perturbed gave them answers. While doing so one of these men witnessed a strange thing. He saw on Swami's broad chest the very Sivarupa. He immediately fell on Swami's feet for forgiveness.

After Ungutur, Swami toured till 8th May of that year and he laid foundation to Maitreyi Ashram at Gudavalli. At this time Swami met a saintly lady called Kurumaddalamma, belonging to Kurumaddali village in Krishna District. Like Rama Krishna Paramahamsa she was an avadhuta. She showered affection on Swami and Swami admired her. If any metal or money was put in her hands like Rama Krishna, she would shiver like a leaf. In simple words she would reveal Upanishadic truths to devotees.

Ohmkar Satra Yaga

Devotees not satisfied with a few days of discourses requested Swami to spend more days in giving these lectures. In the

year 1937 after the Podur village Sanatana meeting by a few forward women of Rajahmundry, the first Ohmkar Satrayaga was organised near Sarangadhara Metta at Yedla Ramadas Temple.

This went on from 23–4–1937 to 13–5–1937 with Homa in the morning and evening. Thousands of people repeated the Ohm and came to understand the meaning of Ohmkar. Geeta and Upanishadik lectures were given by Swami daily morning and evening. Swami expounded the meaning of Ohmkar. He further explained "Animals do not know love, but as an evolved soul, man loves his nearest and dearest. Where as after evolving as an angel, he loves all living beings. Where as after becoming Godman he loves not only all living beings but all that is manifested in the world as trees and plants.

As we keep away from a viper we have to keep away from bad thoughts.

However pure the rain water is, it changes according to the place it falls and changes its purity, so is true of philosophy.

An elephant and lion, a serpant and eagle can never stay in one place, so are good and bad, comfort and sacrifice. When fruit juice is put in a golden vessel there is no reaction, but when put in a copper vessel it is no good for consumption.

One who is desireless, gets every thing and one who has no sorrow attains eternal joy. This is the inner meaning of Kamadhenu and Chintamani. For a diseased man, there is no need of taking all the medicines in the world, but the one he needs. A thirsty man need not drink the whole water in the river to abate his thurst. One precept and one path is enough to attain spiritual liberation. Follow Karma, Bhakti, Dyana or Gyana yogas according to your mental aptitude. During Summer a small fire started in the forest burns the whole tree, to charcoals. So also a little fire of Gyana will do to eradicate all innate instincts.

Whoever that wants to advance in the spiritual field, should try to introspect and question themselves. Are you walking in the same path as the great Rishis ? Then you too shall attain Moksha here and now".

A Sanyasi is like a man who climbs a palm tree. Once he slips he goes down and down. But house holder is like a climber of branched tamarind tree. Even if he slips he can catch hold of another branch. So, Oh Sanyasins! beware of your senses.

When there is no gale, dry leaves and pebbles lie on the earth. When there are no troubles and trials all are good men. A Sthitha Pragjna in all circumstances is unmoved and happy. This is the difference between a man of knowledge and an ordinary man.

As long as sensuous habits of eating and mating are not stopped the doors of moksha are not open.

A fruit dropped from the tree cannot stick to it. A liberated soul can never again be caught in the net of samsara.

There should be one and only one King, the Supreme power in any kingdom. The Supreme mantra is the Ohm and Ohm alone.

You are attending this Ohmkara Satra Yaga to purify your minds. When you go back home, practice this purity and perform your duties without any desire for its fruits. Like the doll of salt that merges in the ocean you shall merge in the eternal bliss.

The first Satrayaga at Rajahmundry ended with tremendous success. Many devotees wanted such Yagas in their places, where there were facilities for travelling. In olden days such Yagas were performed on the banks of rivers. These Satrayagas ultimately came to be known as Saptahas.

Satra Yaga at Donepudi

The second Satra Yaga was held on the banks of Krishna River in the village called Donepudi from 28-3-1940 to 17-4-1940 after the 14th Sanatana Vedanta Sabha was held at Ghantasalapalem. During this time Patanjali Yoga Sutras, and Geeta were rendered by Swami.

Kavi Raju in Opposition

When the Gyana Yagna was being performed, a few atheists, along with Swami's followers, who could not stand the rigorous Ashram life, joined together. Arya Samajists who mis-understood Swami also joined this gang. Tripuraneni Ramaswami Chowdary called Kavi Raju was invited by these. This Kavi Raju was a Social reformer. He did not believe in the caste system, so he advocated the abolition of not only castes, but also religion which has Pujas and other rituals.

So he started his campaign in the same pendal, advocating that priests were spoiling society in a way and Swami was poisoning them by his Vedanta. The fun was he and his group who were against Swami took shelter and food in the same place with others. It seems later on this Kaviraju changed his opinion about Swami.

Many went to Swami and requested him to stop all this and teach them a lesson. But Swami was not at all perturbed. He pacified Swami Nityananda and others. He said "Atheism is volatile where as theism is static. While the body changes into colours, sexes and ages, a wise man should not preach on the basis of these truths. He is then only a atheist. As we are free to preach, the atheists are also free. Let them preach whatever they feel. Why should we prevent them? Let people themselves decide the truth. So my sons ! do not fight. If you go against my word it tantamounts to the breach of my word."

Kotayya Sadhu wrote poems on Swami describing him as anti-social. When Rajayya complained about this, Swami replied,"Let not any one feel good or bad. When some praised us did we gain any thing? Or, are we going to loose anything now. Once again Rajayya said "Swami, he printed these papers and is circulating them." "I am happy at least a few jobless press workers got jobs because of us," said Swami in reply.

One midnight some miscreants set fire to the Yagna pendal, but no body was injured. Even then Swami was not perturbed.

The acts of atheist were increasing day by day. Ultimately, under the leadership of one lady, Tirupatamma, all the women confidently taught a lesson to these fellows.

Swami proved that a saint keeps his equilibrium in every state of affairs, whether praise or curse. When sun rises, the stars and lights fade. Our enemies and criticisers are our teachers. They pin point our defects, so that we may correct them. The real test of our Gyana has come, now but after now.since we could stand all these turmoils.

Life is full of dualities like good and bad, joy and sorrow. One should rise above these dualities.

The thirteenth Sabha was held at Yelamanchali, Vizag district, with the organisation of a Mahila Mandali or a women's society. Swami in his address then said: "This Sanatana Sabha is not founded for one caste or community, — or just for Social reform. Here no lecturer should criticise any other person or religion. Service is our motto, We are here to propagate Bhakti, Dhyana, Karma and Gyana. If one leads a pious life he can be considered to be living in Kruta Yuga. If one leads a sensuous life he is in Kaliyuga. This is the true meaning of Yugas,

Sri Sivananda's Message

Swami started the Tapovana Ashram in Chittoor. On this occasion Swami Sivanandaji of Rishikesh sent a message, "We congratulate you and feel happy on this occasion. There is dearth of Ashrams in the South. If any one wants to lead a spiritual life and live alone there are no Ashrams for their stay. We need such Ashrams in every district."

Swami Bhaskarananda of Vyasa Ashrama went to live in Northern India in Rishikesh. He was often praising his Guru and the Ashram. So much so, Sivananda Swami was always writing, appreciating services of Swami and he was reciprocating it till the end.

The Citizens of Rajahmundry were very advanced. They once again invited Swami to conduct the 6th Sanatana Sabha in 1942. When Swami arrived at that place they welcomed him with eight pairs of bullocks hinged to a cart. Krishna and Guntur districts did not lag behind, they also conducted the Satra Yaga.

After the death of Sayam Varada Dasu, Sadhu Kutumbayya, the chief architect of Tapovanam at Chittoor, ardently carried and spread the message of Swamiji. He suddenly passed away on 18–11–1942.

Sri Jonnalagadda Satyanarayana, an erudite scholar, presided at the Chittoor meeting. From his Presidential chair at Rajahmundry in 1951 he declared : "We can compare the work of Swamiji to that of Buddha Bhagavan. Since twentyfive years he made us hear his clarion call".

Sadhu Samaj

Some Sadhu devotees of Swami prayed that the discourses they are hearing in Satrayagas were not satisfying them. They wanted Gyana Yagna to be conducted for forty days at a stretch Swami out of mercy agreed.

All the forty days were filled with expounding the precepts of many a different religion. A comparitive study was made of religions also. Now, let us examine the Jewels he left us.

1. Never forget your past if you want to progress in future.

2. One who eats to live is free, but one who lives to eat is bound.

3. Stop not with research of books, but re-search your minds.

4. Who falls asleep when it overcomes is a Sadhu, where as, one who sleeps whenever he feels like, is a house-holder.

5. A public servant works according to certain times and routine. Then what about the servant of God who needs a pearmanent post near him?

6. Sin does not come near a saint. So much so, a sinner cannot be a Gyani at the same time.

7. When one becomes old, one cannot become a prophet, but when one is young all the inner forces and senses should be conquered.

8. Ordinary man rejoices at marriage, A saint rejoices at death.

9. Siva is ever-full, but his human creatures are hungry. Serving them is serving Him.

10. The snake retains venom in its mouth, but it does not harm it, so also a Gyani, though living amidst the hub of the world, does not affect him.

11. By conquering the brute forces in oneself one becomes Pasupati, where as, if conquered by brute senses he is called a Pasu or a brute.

12. Those who see the presence of God in themselves, that place where they reside is a pilgrim centre.

13. Showy puja and performances are like stale flowers. Mental worship God prefers.

14. Faith leads man to heaven and the non-believers go to hell.

15. When food is kept in metal utensils it becomes poisonous, so also anger spoils all the penances and practices.

16. Sit and introspect. Soon one can control the mind.

17. Try to clear the doubt about any thing, since it is like a thorn in the body.

18. Newly cemented things when put in water, loose their strength, bur after drying it needs watering. So also a spiritual practitioner should be away from company and crowds, later on nothing spoils him.

19. Running away from this world does not help in realisation. Only Gyana kills all desires. The seeds of a tree may be taken far away, still they sprout. But when they are boiled life disappears.

20. If the command of a man is contrary to God, then obey God. If you are not strong and courageous enough, be behind the society and do nothing and do not proceed forward. The better man is one who stands by God. The next best is one who stands behind. The worst is who advances.

21. Our mind is like an old rag, which when torn with worldly affairs, should be immediately stitched, if not it tears and tears and no space is left for Godliness.

22. There are three types of eye sights. One is superficial, second ordinary and the third extra-ordinary. Superficial observe castes, the ordinary ones see character and the extra-ordinary see the divinity manifested in every one.

23. What avail is it if one studies all the Scriptures and does not have an ounce of practice. ? A heap full of burning coal left without piling of twigs is useless, where as one burning charcoal when fanned with small twigs is more useful. The illiterate knowing and practising one precept is always better.

24. Living alone, and practising for three years leads one nearer to realisation. When all the world is sound asleep, with introspection you can realise that truth is one and not many.

25. The relationship of a guru and his student should be thus. The Guru's practice should be so high that one tenth of it his student can't aspire to practice. The student should have confidence that he can perform twice better than his guru.

26. The conduct of men is of two kinds. One that of the advocate and the other that of a judge. The judge hears both the sides and gives judgement, where as the advocate always wants his side to win. So be a judge in your heart and mind.

27. Those who pray God for Moksha or Darshan are of lesser quality than who pray God not to let them stray from duty, truth and love.

28. Imagine every alphabet of your mantra as a piece of fire which burns all your desires. Every Sloka of the Geeta is a powerful bomb which eradicates our worldliness.

29. Those who perform Puja should cut them and start Japa or meditation. Who meditate much should pray for merging with the Almighty in Samadhi.

30. Those who want to save the drowned should jump into the water, swim and protect. Souls who are liberated alone can save and help others immersed in this worldly mire. But others who are not pious drown others and get drowned.

All his lectures are full of these pearls.

Brahma Vidya School

Not satisfied with the spread of spiritual teaching all over the country, Swami started in the Ashram a Brahma Vidya Patasala, where every aspirant was compulsorily taught Geeta, Upanishat and Patanjali Yoga Sutras. Sanyasins living in the Ashram and ladies who were residing there practising meditation joined this school. Along with teaching these scriptures, Sanskrit was also taught.

The Need of Spiritual Education

When scientific education advanced so much and men are landing on moon and other planets, what is the use of this spiritual teachings ? one may question. The answer for this was given by Swami in many words.

1. When fear and mutual distrust have spread all over the world in the minds of men, the need to displace these with mutual love and affection through religion cannot be under-estimated.
2. Many problems men face during daily life also can easily be solved with the help of spirituality.

3. Only the advocacy of all pervading divinity in every creature can expel this hatred and distrust and also help, to understand with patience.

4. Hurting others ultimately results in hurting one-self indirectly.

Such ideas have to be spread and practiced only through spiritual education.

Education in Colleges and Universities, do not stress on character building or love of mankind. In the beginning practising these percepts may be very difficult but ultimately they give permanent joy. Worldly education may secure a job and earn money. Does money alone give peace of mind ? Then all the Western countries should have been abodes of heaven. Thousands join elementary schools, only a few continue in high schools. In the College still only a handful remain. So also the aspirants for spirituality are handful like gems of rare quality. Since olden days Rishis like Vasista, Viswamitra and in modern times, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Ramathirta are adored and esteemed.

Swami was advocating the need of such Brahmavidya schools.

Welcome Address

In 1945, during the 17th Sabha in the Viruvur village in Nellore district, Swami was praised as the personification of Parameswara himself who came down to eradicate the communal inequalities and to spread spirituality every where. With these aims they said he published great books like Yoga Vasistha, Upanishads etc. They praised him for starting Vyasasrama for the sake of women and Sadhu's where, with simple words, he was teaching them great truths. A welcome address was presented in the above strain writing many of his adjectives.

Can Women Become Sanyasins ?

After Swami took Sanyasa deeksha many people requested him to give them also Sanyasa. Swami always disuaded men not to be in a hurry, saying that the best form of Sanyasa was Atmasanyasa.

Later on a few questioned him about the propriety of women taking Sanyasa. Swami after studying many Sanskrit books and consulting many pandits at Benares, wrote a book named 'Sanyasa Yoga' and once for all settled this issue.

Never did Swami agree to give Sanyasa deeksha to anyone whoever asked. He put some rules before giving them the ochre robes. He insisted on their learning Sanskrit, byhearting Geeta, Katopanishat and Patanjali Yoga Sutras. Apart from this they have to stay for atleast one year in Vyasashram. These men should not have anything to do with their house-holds. They should observe strict abstinence. Because of this strict adherence to rules many could not take Sanyasa from Swami. Only a handful like, Parameswarananda. Vidya Prakasananda, Vidyananda, Nirvanananda and Dyanaprakasananda and a few women like Sadhu Mata could avail this opportunity. Later on Sadhu Mata gave initiation to many women and made them Sanyasins.

In the year 1949 June 16th, he gave Sanyasa to Vidyaprakasananda, the present president of Shuka Brahma Ashram at Kalahasti. He wrote about this incident thus : Swami sent word to me and said, "Tomorrow is your time to take this last Ashrama. You cannot use your previous name. So choose two or three names you like". When I gave out a few names Swami firmly once again said, "You have to spread this spiritual education. So I am giving you the name *Vidya Prakasananda*". Those words still ring in my ears and encourage and enthuse me to discharge my duty of spreading spiritual vidya".

The same thing happened with the present Peetadhipati of Sri Vyasasrama in the year 1954 when he gave him Sanyasa. When Swami asked him what name he liked, he instantly replied that he has no preferences. So whatever Swami likes he may give him. Thus he was named as *Vîdyananda*.

Are You Persuers of Soham ? or Lazy Loners ?

Ordinary people think that Sanyasi's wearing Ochre Clothes do nothing and have become suckers of Society. This false notion is due to, in the name of Sanyasa many become pretentious Swamis. Swami's answer for this criticism is, "Every

Sanyasi should eradicate this false idea, and strive very hard to spread the spiritual knowledge. They should never go back from their path of strict adherence to the precepts. During Tapasya, as far as possible, they should not rely on others for their food or shelter. This dependence has led to laziness and lenience. People also should not encourage such dependence and begging. Such men are not real Sadhus in the real sense. Another answer to their question is medical and engineering students are of no use to the society at large during their study, so also what can a Sanyasi do while still on the road to realisation ? Even for achieving ordinary degrees in education one has to spend years. Think of the years one has to put in practice for self-realisation.

Realising the greatness of Tapasya even Kings left their Kingdoms and palaces to seek this eternal truth. As ages and decades passed number of the such Yogis and Rishis decreased. Such few persons we have are spending their lives for the uplift of mankind by advocating religious truths. Thus many men are able to attain mental peace from their stress in life. Is it enough by offering a little food and once in a while giving a pair of clothes ? Are we discharging our duty to these Sadhus ? Compare what they are giving us for the little food we offer. Thus Swami was defending the true Sadhu.

Independence

On 15th August 1947 India was given independence by the British. On the eve of this Swami proclaimed to people; "We are attaining independence on August 15th, after two hundred years of servitude. Swami Vivekananda and Ramathirtha shed tears at the fate of our country. Many leaders underwent jail punishment. All these trails shall be no more from 15th August. Let us not be proud of this achievement. When we are free from mental servitude, then we can rejoice. Many men and women joined National Congress and under-went difficulties. So let us try to deserve their sacrifice".

After the proclamation of Independence Swamiji once again sent a message to all. "All the monthlies, newspapers and journals published their joy at the attainment of Independance.

All this is very well and good. This is like the rejoicing after the illness is abated. But we have to find out the root cause of this illness, so that it may not be repeated again. Our younger generation should be made aware of the reasons of our servitude. Some say that lack of unity was the chief cause for this, but this alone is not the true reason. The exploitation of one caste over all the others in education. and of another caste's right to fight and rule the masses, are other real causes. Such rights should be abolished. According to one's own ability opportunity should be given to all. Since the British regime and since Mohammad Gazani invaded us, our country suffered innumerable privations. The disunity among the rulers led us to this fate. So let us be united".

After attaining the Independence, in 1948, 22nd Sanatana Sabha was held at Nandimandalam in Cuddapah District. Jonnalagadda Satyanarayana was presiding. Gandhiji passed away. So Swami asked all the people to be silent for two minutes and pray for the father of the nation's peace. Then Swami spoke, "Great men like Gandhiji have already attained peace. There is no need of praying for such great soul's peace. Our heart-felt sorrow be for our unfortunateness in loosing such a great soul". By these words we can understand how Swamiji revered Gandhiji.

One Sri Vedantam Lakshmayya, well read and a political leader attended Nandimandalam meeting to debate with Swamiji. As none encouraged he had to return back. As days passed he came to understand Swami's greatness. He even went to Vyasasram to pay his respects.

Chaturmasya Mahavrata

In the year 1948, devotees, Sadhu's and seekers of truth all went to Swami as a group and requested Swami thus: "Swami, inspite of the Sanatana Vedanta Sabha, and Gyana Yagna, we are not satisfied with it and want to hear the philosophical treatises for a very long time. How long does this take for you, sir."? Swami was pleased and replied, "In olden days Suta Maharshi for twelve

long years, with sixty four thousand Rishis hearing him on the bank of Gomati river in the midst of Naimisaranya, expounded all the puranas. We are not as great as them and time is not enough, so we can perform four month's Chaturmasya Vrata".

Under the guidance of Swami himself, Tumuguntla Ramaswami Gupta and others made arrangements for this Vrata in the year Sarvadharinama. The Vrata was started from Ashadasudda Ekadasi and was decided to end by Kartika Sudda Dwadasi i.e. from 16-7-1948 to 13-11-1948.

There was trouble in Nizam State because of Razakar movement. These Razakars were extending their atrocities even up to Vijayawada. Many advised Swami to stop this Vrata as many thousands may be put to difficulties.

Swami after hearing advices and receiving letters with a strong determination said, "Once we decided to conduct the Chaturmasya vrata there is no going back on it. As Sanyasin there is nothing for us to loose or fear. What we are performing is for the welfare of the world". So declaring Swami started for Vijayawada.

Organiser's Notice

We have arranged Chaturmasya vrata under the presidentship of the founder of Sri Vyasasrama, a great Rishi and respector of all religion. There shall be Geeta study, discourses on Upanishads, along with Bhajans. So all can partake in these meetings, whatever their sex, caste and community may be."

In olden days such gathering were held for years together by Rishis. But now our Swami with his love has undertaken to revive such retreats and conventions. He is a great Rishi who did Tapasya for twelve years and started the Vyasasrama, Sanskrit School, Brahmavidya patasala where no distinction is made in sex or caste. His monthly, Yadardha Bharati, is doing yeomen service in the field of religion. There are more than hundred branches doing spiritual work by the inspiration of Swami. Though big

buildings were constructed with lakhs of Rupees, Swami lives in a hut. Lawyers, doctors and men from other walks of life are attending these meetings.

On the banks of Krishna River in a beautiful mango grove big pendals were constructed. Many outsiders from other districts wished to stay all the four months, so huts were constructed in rows. People who visited this small spiritual village were astounded at Swami's organising ability. It reminded the olden Rishi Ashrams. Thousands of Vijayawada citizens visited daily. Municipality made arrangements for water and lighting.

Those who stayed permanently there would get up at early morning, take their bath in the River, then after their Japa was over, would assemble in the pendal. From Seven to ten Geeta was collectively recited and in between Swami gave his commentary on Geeta. In the afternoon from two to four in the Brahmavidya school, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, Geeta and Upsnishads were taught by Sivacharanam and Sraddananda Swami Again in the evening Pandits, Vedantins and Sadhus used to deliver lectures after which Swami himself would expound on the various religious doctrines and differences in Advaita, Dwaita and Vishishtadwaita.

Two months passed without any interruption. Indian government suppressed the Razakar movement. Every one rejoiced and many believed this was all due to the spiritual power of Swami. So many called him Maharishi which title stuck to him till the end. Thousands believed that Maharishi was Buddha personified.

The End of the Vrata

By 13-11-1948 the four months elapsed victorously. On the last day Swami with all the devotees went to the River Krishna for a bath. He prayed while taking bath, "One fourth of our Punya shall go to rejoice God, the second portion to make the Rishis happy. Let the third portion make every living being happy. The fourth and last shall remove all the hurdles for those who want to persue Sanskrit and the spiritual path. While bathing he asked all the devotees to pray again and again to take birth along with Swami to serve the world.

While Swamiji was living, five such Chaturmasya Vratas were conducted. The second and fifth was at Rajahmundry on the banks of River Godavary. The first and third at Vijayawada and the fourth at Sivagiri in Chittoor District. If any one praised Swami about these successful Vratas Swami would say that it was all due to the grace of God and Rishi's.

Ist Vrata	*16-7-1948 to 13-11-1948*
2nd Vrata	*15-7-1951 to 10-11-1951*
3rd Vrata	*11-7-1954 to 7-11-1954*
4th Vrata	*7-7-1957 to 4-11-1957*
5th Vrata	*26-7-1958 to 22-11-1958*

In the last Vrata the Harijans of Rajahmundry praising him to skies submitted a memoranda.

Harijan's Address of Gratitude

Honourable Sir ! Without any desire you have taught us philosophy and gave us every opportunity of not only learning, hearing but dining and staying here and joining all the formalities.

Swami ! because of your kindness many of us were entitled to become Sadhus and Brahmacharis. We are thus encouraged and enthused.

Oh Great Maharshi ! You gave all of us this opportunity of joining this Mahavratha for which we are ever indebted to you. May the Almighty give you many more years of service.

Whenever Swami was not travelling (to other places) he was conducting the Vrata in the Ashram itself.

Charla Ganapathi Sastri said during the fifth Vrata, "Having studied the history of Satrayaga, I am reminded about it. Our country has a wealth of spirituality, The whole world is in a turmoil and is awaiting peace. Now it is up to us to bring out country to that level and spread world peace".

Sanatanists, Communists and Reformists

The Sanatanists were jealous of Swami. One of the pandits went to him and questioned: "Swami ! Sri Rama Krishna Paramahamsa just by his touch could awaken the divinity in Swami Vivekananda. Can you do this?" Swami without any hesitation whatsoever replied "Yes ! If you are as great as Vivekananda I shall do so". The pandit without any other word left the place.

The atheists also were envying Swami for his popularity. They hated him, since thousands of people were contributing for his causes and also giving him presents. So some of them went to him, "Swami ! you are amassing wealth from Circars and taking away to Rayalaseema. Why don't you spend what you acquired here only ?" Swami smiled and instantly replied, "My brethern ! your area is prosperous. Rayalaseema is in the grip of famine, Is it a fault if we spend this money to feed them ? You say you are here for the uplift of the poor and downtrodden. Then what happened to your fraternity, and equality ? In this respect we are also communists. the only difference is we believe in God and non-voilence". They paid their respects to Swami and returned.

In fact, at that time Rayalaseema was in the grip of drought and famine since seven years To meet the daily expenses of the Ashram became very difficult. With the donations given by Circar devotees, the hostel and school were run. Many villagers were also given employment in the Ashram.

Again some social reformers who did not believe in God came to Swami and started argument with him. "Swami ! When the whole of Rayalaseema is affected with famine, here you are sitting and delivering philosophical discourses. You along with your followers should go and serve these wretched poor as your fundamental duty".

"My dear men ! What you say is absolutely correct. Kindly give the names of a few societies in these places who are rendering service". They immediately gave the name of Jeeva Karunya Sangham as a prominent society which incessantly was distributing

rice gruel day and night". On hearing this Swami smiled. "Is it so. I am very happy to learn this. This Jeeva Karunya Sangha is a part of our Ashram. The people rendering service there are all our followers. So you shall now understand how we are discharging our duty a bit". The men were surprised to hear this. After paying homage the left.

Religion – Equality – Yoga.

The regard and respect Swami showed to all religions was tremendous. All over the world, people are more ignorant than intelligent. The underlying principles and precepts are same for all religions, but the practice differs. With this view Swami put on the Nishta Ashram all the religious emblems. Swastik, Half Moon, and the Cross and Ohm. Seeing all these one devotee asked "Swami to which religion you belong"? "The truth that shines behind all these religions, which is eternal that is my religion" he replied.

Ramana Maharshi was expounding Gyana Yoga. Who ever approached him with Vyragya he would say "Know who you are" Quoting this Swami Nityananda asked Malayala Swami, "Swami why are you asking people to do Bhajan's and perform Pujas and some of these Karmas?'. Swami said "My asking to know who you are, how many are able to discriminate? Do you think it is easy for ordinary people to do this? God sent me to propagate this Karma Yoga".

That is why Swami was always advocating desireless work, which leads to Bhakti. Bhakti leads to Gyana ultimately.

Advocacy of Geeta

Swami considered Geeta as a Gospel, which establishes equilibrium between all Yogas.

If Geeta is studied to day by thousands of women and men in Andhra it is due to Swami's wonderful propaganda.

During his tours, daily in the early morning hours, during Chaturmasya Vratas, Geeta study was made compulsory. "*Those*

who spread Geeta are my real lovers" said Krishna himself. Then why are we preventing people of all communities from it's study? When Geeta was first recited to Bhudevi (a woman) by God Vishnu why are we saying that women have no right to pursue its study"?

When the Vedas declare "*Mother is God*" –*Matru DevoBhava*" how is it some so called pandits equated women with sinners. If mother is a sinner how can her children be pious? If only we have advocated the greatness of mother and put her on a high pedestal our fate would have been otherwise. What fools are we, immersed in ignorance we debarred our own mothers from the very spiritual path".

If there was any thing so sacrilegeous in Geeta book I would have myself thrown it, but I have found contrary to it". Thus Swami advocated Geeta study in all his meetings.

Difference in Yugas

The rise or fall of a nation is due to the customs and traditions of its people. If most of the people are illiterate and believe in futile customs that country's downfall is sure. This may be taken as an example of the fate of our own country. The wrong notions of the ordinary people about the four Yugas has led the country to many a trail and tribulation,

When all the world is progressing and scientifically advancing we believe that truth is deteriorating in Kaliyuga and since Krutayuga little by little Dharma is diminishing which is contrary to truth. Since we have such fantastic ideas, what happened is, we are day by day becoming more and more apathetic. The eternal truth is, the world progresses day by day till the end or till the last day of Pralaya. The Yugas have come into existance according to piety of the rulers. Where the king rules the country with love treading on the path of truth that is Tretayuga. A tree at all times, gives flowers, fruits, so also in a country truth shall be reigning. For People who are truthful it is Krutayuga, For those who tread on wrong and un-pious path it is Kaliyuga. Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, Sri Ramakrishna, Adi Shankara, all these great men

do not belong to Krutayuga. By discharging one's own duty and by leading a pious life one lives always in Kruta Yuga". This was the explanation Swami gave for Yugas and the underlying secret of the theme. Every one accepted this with joy.

Writing

Commentaries on Geeta, Brahmasutras have enriched our culture. Swami either wrote ; encouraged others to write nearly one hundred and fifty books and published them. No other Ashram can boast of having published so many books.

With the monthly publication of Yadartha Bharathi, we can say that the Ashram's real publishing started. Swami was writing essays for this monthly. Whenever a pious thought came he would write it and publish in the monthly under the heading 'Upadesa-Vakyas'. Later on by the request of devotees these thoughts were published in a book form in 1929 and the second part was published in 1933. The essays on Vedanta were published in a book form under the name "Svabhoda Sudakaram". To reiterate that all have a right to the repetition of "Ohm" the book 'Ohm' was brought out.

With Swami's ideas on remarriage of women and other essays on purity of thought, reformative essays were written by Swami from 1933 to 37. The book named "Dharma Sethu" was published in 1941. "Strotramanjari" containing praise of Gods and Godesses came out in a book form. This came into vogue as many of these stotras are read in daily prayers. "Prasnottara Ratnamala" came in the form of questions and answers. In this book Swami was quoting many slokas to prove his answers, but many may find it difficult to persue. So as a sequence to this book 'Manikyamala' was published with three chapters, on Karma-yoga, Gyanayoga and about division of castes. In 1945 a criticism on Geeta named Geetartha Prakasika was published. "After studying the Upanishads, Biographies of great Saints I do not see any thing further can be learnt than what was already said in the Geeta. The so-called learned men's discrimanation of castes, also led me to write this commentary on Geeta. Nothing contrary to equality and fraternity was said in this great book." swami wrote in the preface of this book like this.

For the benefit of the old and women, Geetas in different size of types were printed, with just the text. Geeta (slokas) with commentaries of all the three Acharya's was also Published.

The Balayogini was Published in 1945. This is the life of a girl who sought truth and became a Sanyasini. Her way of live in childhood, during meditation, after realisation were told as a story. This story was the life history of Swami himself, many suspected. "Lokoddarakam" is a book in the dialogue form, between Rama Krishna Sarma, a brahmin and Sivaramakrishna, a non-brahmin. According to the piety, and truthfulness of a man only his caste has to be decided, was the gist of this book.

Third Volume of "Upadesamrutam" in 1948, "Eswara Krupa," a collection of Swami's lectures during a three year period were published. In 1947, & 1948, "Guru Bhakti Prabhavam" and "Grihastha Ashram Dharma" were published. In 1951 "Narada Bhakti Sutras" with commentary was also published. In 1952 and 53, Karma-Siddanta, Chaturmasya Mahatyam, Mukti Sopana Dinacharya, Gyanodaya Dairy were published.

Malayala Yatindra Gita

There are many Gitas like, Ashtavakra Geeta, Sri Rama-Gita, Brahma Gita and Bhagavatgita, which is the last but not the least in importance. There are forty kinds of Gitas.

Some devotees went to Swami and prayed, "Swami ! every age has brought out a Gita. We in the present age are not aware of what is good and best for our lives. You were kind enough to teach ways of truth in simple words. Please kindly write all these teachings in the form of Gita for the benefit of us". So Malayala Yatindra Githa was published. Many slokas were written by Swami himself. Madhavachaitanya Brahmachari, Krishnacharanam and Sivacharanam completed this Gita with 18 chapters and 1120 slokas.

Years 1954, 1955 saw the books Nirvighna Yoga Siddi and Katopanishat with Swami's commentary. Every year, during the month of Karthik, a book was being written by Swami. Swami established a press at Chittoor with the name Vedavyasa Press. All the books of Swami and of others were also published here.

Publication of Old Books & Manuscripts

There are thousands of old manuscripts in Sanskrit which are yet to be published. Foreigners did research in some of these books and brought them to light. Usually with the aid of the government such publications are done. But Malayalaswami published "Yogavasistha" single-handedly, for which the whole of Andhra nation is indebted. The translation and commentary was written by Nirvikalpananda Swami. It took nearly two decades to finish it, i, e. from 1936 to 1954. The last part was finished by Vidyaprakasananda. Swami had to spend fifty thousand rupees for its publication. This is the greatest work that has been published from the Ashram.

Atmapura written by Sri Shankarananda Muni with 18 chapters was rendered into Telugu by Sri Janardha Chaitanya Swami. This book was brought in two volumes in 1946. Sivayogadeepika, the Tamil book which he read during his youth was translated into Telugu by Guda Krishnayya.

'Anubhuti Prakasam', Vidyaranya Swami's great work, consisting of the essence of eighteen Upanishats was rendered into Telugu by a great scholar Bankupalli Mallayya Sastri. He highly appreciated Swami's consistent service in the publication of such old books. Due to war paper was scarce. Though it was submitted some time back it could be published only in 1942. Though Gita was published in many types and with commentaries, once again in 1950, with nine commentaries it was rendered from Tamil into Telugu by Sri Srinivasacharyulu.

'Buddha Charya' written in Hindi by Rahul Sankrutyayana was translated by Sri Ramakrishnananda in 1951. When the manuscript was read before publication, Malayalaswami wept with sorrow at the trails of Buddha.

Sivacharanam, who studied in the Ashram school became a well-versed writer. On Swami's command he wrote Guru Gita, Vivekachudamani, Shankara Vijayam, Narada Parivrajakopanishat, Patanjali Yoga Sudhakara etc.

Brahmachari Ananda Mohan, now Vidya Prakasananda, translated Dharmapada, Vedantahridaya, Amrutabindopanishat, Ashtavakragita, Sadguru Suprabhatam.

Many Sanskrit books, and old books which were out of print were also reprinted. All this could be achieved by Swami's greatness.

New Year Message

One devotee went to Swami on New Year's day and requested for his message in 1949. He asked three questions and the answers for these three are to be considered as his message,Swami replied. They are:

Question : Swami ! What is it that pleases you most in this world ?

Swami : There is nothing beyond this Atma, either to hate or love. But I like learning and Tapasya.

Question : What is the service you rendered that pleased you most ?

Swami : This education, meditation, moksha are of no avail to me, Let me not undeservedly spend the money. He gave me, or the food He provided me. My spreading His message among masses keeps me ever happy.

Question : How should you want men to behave ?

Swami : By being educated, or by meditating or by Bhakti, men shall never become great. They should have a pure heart as a child.

Such were Gurudev's aims, After the 23rd Sanatana Sabha at Telaprolu in 1949, Swami went on a tour of West Godavari District. When he was in a village called Tadikalapudi, he become suddenly unwell. Cancelling the tour he went back to Vyasasrama. This alarmed all his devotees, but by God's grace he became well soon and started his tour again in the month of June.

By 1950, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Aravindoo passed away. Swami expressed his deep regret at their demise. He said, "We deeply feel for the departure of great souls. But our pious land has produced many great men, so let us pray for their arrival in hundreds".

Allotment of the Trust Monies

In the year 1942 Swamiji proclaimed that the finances of the Ashram be divided into three separate divisions. One portion should be spent for the school, hostel and teacher's salaries. The second portion to be used for the pilgrimage of sadhus, poor and orphaned students. The last and the third for the boarding and other facilities of the devotees who are staying permanently in the Ashram.

Silver Jubilee of the Ashram

By 8th May 1950 the Ashram completed its twentyfive years. Everybody wanted it to be celebrated in a big way but Swami did not give his consent saying, "By such outward show we loose our piety and purpose. The speakers start praising us, which is *tatamount to self – boasting*. According to his advice in the year 1951, on 19th, 20th and 21st February, with Guru Puja, and Gita recitation, the Celebrations ended with poor feeding.

Chapter – 8

MAHASAMADHI

Swami's life, not only as a spiritual gaint but as a great reformer also, may be recorded. Before spiritual awakening follows, social awareness should come first, was his dictum. He was vexed at the discrimination of castes. "Unless and until the whole society is educated no amount of social reform transforms it. The interpolations in our scriptures had led to our downfall. After Buddha no other spiritual Master, even Shankara, did not pay attention towards social reform. In the modern era, Dayananda Swami, Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshavchandra and others, with their sharp edge of intelligence, cut many an over-growth of unsocial customs.

Swami also used to feel sorry for the suppression of the downtrodden. In 1914 itself, as we are already aware, published a book on facts about castes named "Lokoddarakam". Swami advocated: "There are differences in species, like different varieties of birds, parrots, peacocks etc., so also different animal species like lions, elephants, deer etc. But there are no species in men or women. All are same, except in their superficial colours. Then why all this suppression and exploitation of some by others? The property of the father belongs equally to all children, not to a few of his kids. So also God belongs to every one. He is not the property of one caste or community or one nation. Take the example of a village head. He exploits all others and becomes rich. One fine morning all his riches were robbed by decoits. Being ignorant and weak the villagers never even raised a finger. So is the fate of our country. The masses became illiterate and morally weak. So we lost our independence. All the religions like Buddhism, Christianity and Muhammadanism came into existence due to their Prophets. So also all these castes came as time lapsed. There was no casteism in Vedic times. If, as some say, the four castes came from God's mouth, shoulders, and feet, then what about all the masses in the world? Are there more than one God who created them? It is not superficial cleanliness that matters. Purity of mind and pious living is the true

criteria in deciding one's caste". In such strong words Swami expressed his opinions about the downfall of our country.

Removal of Untouchability

Untouchability is a malignant growth in our Religion. We have to eradicate it, but before asking all men to mix, mingle and eat with them, the Harijans also should learn to live cleanly and reform themselves. They should stop eating beef and stop drinking liquor. One of the Harijan workers questioned Swami, "When Christians and Muslims are eating beef why should our Harijans not do so, Swami ?". Swami expressed his opinion without any hesitation : "We are Hindus. Our scriptures do not advocate beef eating. Cow is considered sacred as a mother. So, as Hindus, if they want to be on par with other Hindus they should leave this habit". Once again the Harijan worker expressed his doubt. "Swami ! If every one stops killing the cows, how are the cobblers going to live ? "

Swami :- No body should stop his vocation for earning. That does not mean he should kill and eat cow's meat.

Question :- Due to lack of food they are eating beef !

Swami :- This is not a fact. They eat this meat only when a dead-body is available. When it is not available are they fasting ? There are certain tribals who do not eat meat at all.

Question :- Sorry Swamiji ! We beg your pardon. We want your blessings.

Swami :- Do not argue with caste people. Reform the Harijans first. Bad habits are like contagious diseases. Beware of them.

Gosha or Purdha

Many questioned Swamiji about his opinion on child marriage and widow remarriage. Swami published his opinion in Yadartha Bharati thus : "Regarding widow marriage various shastras wrote differently according to the times and rule of

the Kings. What was law in the time of Hindu kings was not so during Muslim period. What was a law during Muslim rule was null and void during British period. Take the example of gosha. Some time back, it was observed as a sign of class by the rich. Now we consider it as an atrocious custom.

Remarriage is not good for man or a woman. There cannot be two types of rules for man and woman. By preventing young widows to get married the society had to face so many abortions and child killings. It is better to remarry and live an honourable life. Brahmacharya is essential for any sex for leadinga spiritual life. But women who are householders once should lead pious life and serve the community after becoming a widow. But encouraging spiritually-bent men or women to remarry is sinful. I must without hesitation denounce the selling of young girls to men for marriage. At the same time girls purchasing men with dowry also should be decried. Because of this dowry system, hundreds and thousands of worthy girls are not being married. Some of them are even committing suicide. Many families have become bankrupt. Another horrible law is, a man having the right to marry any number of wives. Where as he is not punished for this adultery, woman is loathed if she commits the same. No where in the world women should live by selling her body. This is a stigma on the women's character. Many devoted wives are committing suicide because of this pernicious conduct of their husbands. I also strongly condemn child marriages, which makes the very nation physically weak and psychologically inept. Government should pass laws banning all these social evils. Dear brothers, do not waste money in marriages by giving non-vegetarian dinners and lavishly decorating the pendals. If you have any consideration for the poor, feed them or send donations to a service organization". Thus, Swami brought a great revolution in the minds of people as 'Das Capital' brought revolution in Russia. Swami is named 'Andhra Swami'. It is justified. His name shines in the annals of history in golden letters.

Self-Discipline of Swami

Swamiji is a personification of self-discipline. What he preached he practised. Whatever were the disciplines he was

practising during his meditation he practised the same after his tapasya was over. We already observed that he never believed not only over-eating, but not even touching anything during intervals between luncheon and evening light meal. Four Mondays, Two Ekadasis, New Moon day, on Krittika Nakshatra day in every month, he was fasting till his Sanyasa Ashram. After sanyasa he was observing only Ekadasi.

Swami was wearing till the end one long khadi cloth. All his followers also wear one piece of khadi only. He slept on a hard table or a mat. In the last days, he was forced during his illness, to rest on a mattress.

In 1948 when he was suffering with a corbuncle, a devotee named Sannapareddi Lakshmi Devi requested him to sleep on a cotton mattress, she brought. Inspite of the doctor's appeal also Swami did not heed. In the year 1952 Swami had to be operated for his cataract of both eyes at Tenali by Dr. Vempati Suryanarayana, a Gandhian and social reformer of Tenali. Even during this period of his prolonged illness of eight months, due to diabetes, he refused a regular bed. During his pilgrimage in younger days, and after Ashram foundation, even during the height of summer, he refused to use even wooden chappals.

Once during mid summer Swami had to walk on the Arkonam railway station platform. His feet were full of heat boils. His devotee Rajayya prayed Swami to wear chappals to protect his feet. Let us hear Swami's reply, "All these years I never used them. Now for fear of these water boils should I change my mind and accept defeat? Once I change my mind all my followers do the same. Let me continue this old habit. When hundreds of people come to see me and in that hubub people push each other and walk with their wooden chappals, think how much pain it causes to others?" Thousands of devotees were ready to contribute lakhs of rupees just at his very wish, but Swami never spent a pie for his personal use. Many big buildings were constructed for school, hostel, for Sadhu's to live, but till the end Swami lived only in a cottage called 'Nishtasrama'. Many devotees requested Swami to give them permission to construct a building

for his personal use. "During my meditation or otherwise never stayed in a big building. One should never forget his past. Those who contributed for these good causes what shall they think if we spend huge monies for our building? Apart from this if Sanyasins want such palatial buildings with all facilities, then what about the ordinary house-holders?

During his tours also Swami never stayed in a householder's home. A hut was constructed for his stay during long periods of stay. Even Buddha used to stay with his group of bhikkus outside a village or a city in a big garden.

Non - acceptance – Aparigraha

Huge amounts were donated for Swami's service activities. Some commented: "Swami! with the power of his Mantras and Yantras is attracting all this amount". Swami would without hesitation reply: "Yes! I have two great Mantras. Any one can use them. There is no secret. I never beg for anything and once I take a step forward to do any work there is no going back. So use these two great Mantras". Once a man went to Swami, and said: "Swami! kindly let me know by which Mantras you are able to get so much money and are attracting so many people". "Except the two letters 'So-ham' I have nothing. By repeating these two words I realised everything, with which every other thing follows".

Once a devotee named Muppalla Rangareddi offered Swami twentyfive thousand rupees he received as a bribe from one diamond merchant of Golkonda. With his intuitive power Swami learned the devotees intention. Without any hesitation he replied, "What you want to give me, the money, you got from Lord Venkateswara's emerald purchase? Is this what you have learnt from us all these years?" So immediately Ranga Reddy stopped taking bribes and begged pardon of Swami.

A detached and devoted spiritual seeker of the Venkatagiri Raja's family, named Bhaskarananda, offered Swami two lakhs of Rupees for developing the Ashram, but Swami gently refused saying that they never knew by which means this amount was earned by his forefathers.

Ex-Governor Anantasayanam Ayyangar and Ex-President of India Neelam Sanjiva Reddi often used to pay visits to Swami. Many officials of the state offered their services but Swami used to tell them : "We always depended on the Almighty. Whatever is necessary he provides us". Those who have conquered desire, desire becomes their very slave. He never used to touch the money devotees offered, but the office takes care of it.

Swami never believed in amassing money for the Ashram. Whenever money was available he would spend it on publications. "If money is amassed, robbers may steal it but if books are stolen it shall be put to good use", he would say.

During the Rayalaseema famine Swami spent huge amounts for providing work to the villagers near the Ashram. If any one questioned the wiseness in spending so much, Swami promptly would reply: "What for is money if it is not put to use for good purposes" !

Some one or other from Kerala would come to the Ashram pretending that they were Swami's relatives. They were asked to be fed for one day in the Ashram and even trainfares were not given for their return journey. Swami spent only forty rupees from the Ashram for repairing a well in Narayana Gurukula where he studied. Except this not even a single pie was spent by Swami from the Ashram coffers during his life time.

Humility

Rajayya, who since 1937, served Swami as his very shadow, comments, "I have never seen Swami neglecting or looking down on any one. He never used to speak lying down and even during midnight or summer afternoons, when the sun was tormenting. He would never receive any small thing with his left hand." Not only this. He proudly says, "I have travelled with Swami for twenty-five years. Never once did he travel in a car or a cart with any lady. He never conversed with a lady without a third party being present. This used to remind me of Suka Yogi".

Swami never allowed any one to perform marriages in the Ashram premises. Neither he allowed the photos of Gods with

their spouses to be put in the Ashram. Whenever couples visited the Ashram they had to stay seperately in the men's and women's wings.

He always attended to his personal work and never allowed his devotees to do anything, even the mat he used to sleep. Once during his Chaturmasya Vrata, he went into the bathroom in a hurry. Meanwhile Rajayya seeing this wound the mat on the table and cleaned the cottage. Swami came back from the bathroom. "Oh ! today I failed in my duty", so saying he once again put the mat on the table and wound it. Such was his discipline.

When devotees offered to massage his paining feet Swami would gently refuse saying, "Obey your Guru and walk in a righteous path, that is real service to your Guru and not this massage". Once a devotee asked "Swami ! is it necessary that you should still fast ? This is like all the time being in the kitchen cooking and cooking. Then when are you going to enjoy the fruits of your diligence ?". Swami's reply was, "All the time the hotel cooks and choultry cooks will be busy cooking. Does that mean that they are going hungry without eating and enjoying their preparations ?" And he added "When signs are enough to make people understand you, why should you bother to talk. Even when you talk be concise in your words".

Discipline and Daily Practice

Let us examine what Swami's convictions were regarding daily practice.

1. When one receives rupee notes from others, before taking them he examines several times whether they are good or bad and then accepts. Study as many books as you like, but examine how many of their ideas may be practical.

2. Though self-realisation should be the aim in life, one should devote time for helping others and also pursue studies.

3. *Path finders should walk in the front and show the way. Such people have become rare, so the world is lacking in leaders.*

4. *While climbing the ladder one leaves the lower wrung and climbs up, so also a spiritual seeker should leave the lower instincts.*

5. *Those who critisize one self and praise others are the best people. Criticising oneself and others equally are goodmen. Self-boasting and criticising others are the worst type of men.*

6. *There are three types of patients. One takes medicines but hates dieting, the other strictly observes diet but does not take medicine, the last one is a stickler to both. Such two types can never aspire to realise. But the best men do meditate and lead pious life.*

7. *A face painted in full black colour, when seen in the mirror inspite of cleaning it, looks black. So also without a pure heart any amount of superficial Japa and penance will do.*

8. *God loves those who are grateful. Give a glass of milk with sugar to those who gave you a glass of water when you were thirsty.*

9. *As sons would be fathers, so also the present students would be teachers. Always revere your Guru which makes you great.*

10. *What you have not experienced do not teach. This is deceit. It is like a blind man pretending sight and leading others.*

11. *Without character there is no use of meditating hundreds of mantras. One mantra is enough for a pious man. What is the use of sowing hundreds of seeds in a salty land?*

12. Some hesitate to eat food from a low caste house. But it is the money earned through bad means that harms more. Poisoned milk from a rich or poor home does kill people.

13. We can live without milk or sugar, but it is very difficult without salt and water. So also life without love of God and discipline is painful.

14. Never accept mediocre men as your Masters or Gurus, then you will receive their vibrations. Imagine Krishna, Buddha, Ramakrishna, Christ as your Gurus.

15. There are plenty of people who are devoted to God but only a handful have his mercy and blessing.

16. Others may not detect your faults, but these affect you and make you unhappy.

17. If a mole hill of sin is committed today, it expands into a mountain tomorrow.

18. Life of Brahmacharya is the best. The middle way is married life, the worst life is adultery.

19. When you are concentrating it should be like a stream of unending oil. When ideas occur, I never hesitated but would sit and write even without luncheon.

Once Swami wrote to one of his devotees, Sashirekhamma, "Spend your whole life in practice. Just hearing Vedanta is like eating poisoned milk food. Only through practice you achieve everything, So practice without hesitation. Then your very word shall have the force of a gun."

Thus the place of practice, was taught.

Simplicity

Swami discouraged ostentatious and showy celebrations. There were instances when gaudy decorations of the pendal and stage were over-decorated for the meetings were asked to be

removed. Once devotees wanted to celebrate Swami's birth day. Swami gently persuaded them saying that they were having many celebrations as it is, why increase them in number? By increasing all these superficial things we shall be away from God and Godliness." During Swami's lifetime his birthday was never celebrated.

Once a devotee author wanted to write Swami's biography. He requested for details. Swami refused to give them. He said that what he achieved is so small that it is not worth writing. Whenever people brought costly fruits or articles for presentation Swami would gently scold them, "Why did you spend so much on these, you should have spent this money on a good book or for a good cause".

Many Sadhus allow their devotees to take their photos in different situations and times. For many years Swami never even allowed photos to be taken. So the devotees could not even record his voice except once or twice.

Once in a small village, the devotees welcomed him with their drums, bugles and a bullock cart. Rajayya and others felt that this was an insult to Swami. Swami disuaded Rajayya saying "In some places they have taken me on an elephant. Now what they could afford they have brought. So let us go". One devotee painted Swami's portrait (three feet by three feet) in which Vishnu, Brahma and Maheswara were showering flowers on Swami and blessing him. Swami asked it to be brought to the pendal. He asked the frame to be removed. Every one was wondering what happens next. Swami took the painted cloth, tore it and sent it to be dropped into the Ashram tank. The poor devotee was thunderstruck and was pinned to the spot where he was. Swami emotionally declared: "Never boast! What you know you tell, but not one word more. Have you seen the three Murtis blessing me from above? By such deeds and words what little greatness we have flies if we allow boasting".

Kindness

Once while Swami was asleep on the stone bench near Kasi-bugga in the Ashram, a group of people approached him and said

"Swami, since two days we have no food". Swami immediately asked them to be fed from the food kept for the morning breakfast. Next day afternoon also they were fed well. Swami said, "I know by experience what hunger is while in Gogarbha. So through experience only one should realise". The ashram cattle were taken care of very well and especially on Gokulastami they were fed with the green grass that was brought from the hills by the students. He even put long stones for rubbing their backs when irritated by mosquito bites.

Once he called Rajayya, "We are feeding Sadhus and poor cattle, but what about the pigs?". So all the pigs of the surrounding places were brought by their owners and they were sumptuously fed with gruel, rice chaff, cut vegetables, etc. Swami's joy was unbounded when he saw them enjoying their food.

Whenever a serpant was found in the Ashram it was thrown out with special tongs that was made to order. Not only animals and reptiles, even trees were loved by Swami. When Rajayya was plucking mangoes from the trees, Swami got angry for his thoughtlessness in plucking so many leaves unnecessarily. He never used plantain leaves for taking his food till the end. The reason he gave was, "Once in Nellore we went to a Reddi family for Biksha. Early morning, when we saw the plantain garden full of green leaves, it looked joyous and happy. Again in the evening when I went for my bath and saw the garden, Lo! the plantain trees looked struck with grief. The oozing from them were tears of despair. Since then I promised myself never to eat in a plantain leaf again".

When once he noticed that the calves were weak due to lack of mother's milk, he left drinking milk for many months and insisted on feeding the calves to the full.

Daily Routine

Now let us examine the daily routine of the Ashramites. Daily they have to go round and see if the surroundings are clean or otherwise. No Ashramite should wear costly dress or

jewellery. His or her clothings should not touch the ground. Potatoes and sweet potatoes should not be used in their diet. Every one should attend the morning meditation, study Gita without fail. None should talk during prayer but keep perfect silence. Should never use the Ashram articles without prior permission. Food should not be wasted. If for some diseasas they think they have to eat certain foods, then they have to leave the Ashram and stay in a hospital or in some other place.

All the Ashramites should get up in the early hours and take their bath and come to the prayer hall by five o' clock. Then Swami comes and starts by saying 'Ohm' and prays to God. Then Gita recitation begins. After that some scripture shall be studied. Swami comments on them. Thus ends the morning prayer with these *auspicious sentences* :

May Eternal Religion be established.

May Religion of Love live long.

May Religion of Shanti survive.

May Religion of Truth prevail.

May Religion of Eternity be uplifted

May Religion of Rishis spread.

May Religion of Freedom be victorious.

May Religion of Gyana (wisdom) reign.

After the morning session all the Ashramites would go back to their respective places for light tiffin. Except the students most of the devotees would not take any thing. Swami would go back to his home for meditation and then writing. Either he would write for the monthly or write some book or other. At times he would dictate to the students to write.

After the work was over, Swamiji would receive the visitors and devotees. He used to inquire about their welfare. Then would arrange for their luncheon, after which he would go out to inspect the construction of new buildings in the ashram.

At 11'o clock every day, Puja was performed and prasad was distributed. Exactly at 12'o clock luncheon gong was given. During luncheon all would sit in rows. Before starting, the 15th chapter of Gita would be recited. At the same time Swami would take his luncheon in his hut. Then he would hear news from papers and letters from devotees. At last he would take rest for sometime. After rest he would go to Brahma-Vidya Patasala. Then he would inspect the progress of the students' study and would correct their pronunciation if necessary.

By four in the evening all would again assemble in the prayer hall. After prayer Swami would give his discourse on some subject. Then he would leave for his evening meditation. The students would remain in the prayer hall doing Bhajan. During this period there would be pin-drop silence in the whole Ashram.

Visitors once again pay their respects to Swami at Seven o' clock. After Bhajan every one would go to the dining hall. Before taking food praises of Goddess would be recited. Students study till ten in the night. Except those who guard the ashram all take rest and sleep. Swami never deviated from thjs routine.

This discipline led the students to study and at the same time have spiritual foundation for their future. Till date this routine is being observed in the Vyasasram.

Training His Disciples

Swami never hesitated to punish the culprits who deviated from the regular routine. At the same time he was most kind-hearted. Whereever his students went they earned name and fame. Such was the tutorings Swami gave. Every one that visited the Ashram were astonished at this rigorous discipline. Some of the punishments he gave to his students were fasting, mounavrata, pilgrimage; some-times even physical punishment. 'Unless gold is burnt in the fire it will not be free of its impurities, So much so the students should some times have to undergo these trials and punishments," he would say. Once a woman devotee started talking during evening prayers. So she was sent away

from her place and every one had to fast that day. While eating no one should make noises. Nor are they allowed to make sound while taking their spectacles from their cases. He would demonstrate how to take them noiselessly. Because of such arduous training all his meetings were conducted in absolute silence.

Once Rajayya disturbed Swamiji by talking while he was writing. Swami angrily said "You have unnecessarily spoiled my concentration. Go out and never tell me such worldly matters hereafter". Once one devotee travelled without a railway ticket. Swami came to know of it. He punished him by pouring cow-dung water on his head before every one and chastised. "Because of such Sadhus like you we are all insulted and spirituality has gone into the mire".

During evening meal one of the students would loudly proclaim to the gathering. "Children of God ! Never be angry. Be patient. Please do not smoke in the ashram premises". Thus visitors were warned. If any student was unable to recite a sloka his ears would be pinched before every one. Later on Swami would call him near and kindly say, "Unless you are punished you would not have a future. It is for your own good we are doing this".

Many people would think Swami was a miser. He would not throw even a small bit of paper. He was using only a big mug of water for washing his face and feet. Seeing this one devotee remarked, "Why are you so parsimonious, even in using water Swami?". "Yes, I have to be ! without water, fire, air i.e. the five elements, nothing can be done. By wasting water now, in the next birth we will be born in a dry country" he replied. He advised his followers not to waste money on fire works. This was the reason why Swami ordered all the devotees to first present the Ashram with match boxes on Deepavali day. Once a devotee took a book from the library, underlined it. Swami, calling and admonishing him said, "this book does not belong to you. If you think the matter important, copy it and give it away, but never underline and spoil the book".

Not only devotees, Sadhus, Ministers, Presidents of Maths paid visits to the Ashram. The students were ordered not only

to respect them but also see to their facilities. During special puja days thousands would come. They were all fed very well, but nothing could be done for their stay. Swami would pacify the devotees, "Please brethern ! When we come to your place you paid utmost attention with devotion, but here due to lack of facilities we are unable to provide any thing. Please treat this as your mother's home and not as your father-in-law's house. Then you can excuse us with love". People hearing him would burst into laughter and did not mind the small troubles they had to face.

Swami would explain the inter-dependence of Sadhus on house-holders and house-holders on Sadhus. He detested speakers who would use other's time during lectures. Once Rajeswarananda Swami, without stopping in due time, continued his speech. After the meeting was over, he was called and advised, "If the cook himself eats the meal, what about the guests ? Organisers should never use other's time. So remember, this always".

Even in small things like cutting vegetables, breaking coconuts. Swami would pay attention and teach the easy methods. Satisfying him with one's behaviour was like walking on a double edged sword. Such was his strong discipline which, though hard in the beginning, benefitted them in the long run.

Vedanta in a Nut-shell

Once some visitors to Tirupati on their way back home paid a visit to the Ashram. They were in a hurry to go away as there was hardly any time for their train. "Swami, please give us Vedanta in a nut-shell." "Do not immerse in worldly affairs. Forget not God or Atma in you," said Swami laughingly.

Ramakrishnananda Swami reiterated in so many meetings that he was indebted to Swamiji. "When I was young, the first time I met him he advised me, 'Beware of women. They can create or destroy'. Even today these words ring in my ears".

Swami Tatwananda and Annapurnananda passed away. In 1951 after the second Chaturmaya Mahavrata in West Godavary

district. In 1953, during Nalgonda Sanatana meeting, the lady president of that day did not attend due to unavoidable circumsta-nces. Since then Swami asked his student and a good speaker Sadhu Janabai to preside for the ladies, meeting every year.

Mukti Sopana Yagna

Swami performed Mukti Sopana Yagna from 2-4-1953 to 19-4-1953 in Nayudugudem in West Godavary district. On all these days, Geeta was intensly studied. He gave presents to fifty-four sadhus after the meeting was over, then proceeded to Rajahmundry and other places and returned to the mother Ashram in the third week of May.

In 1954, the 28th Sanatana Sabha was held and Rajeswara-nanda presided. After this Kalahasti meeting, Swami toured Bangalore and other places and visited many women's associations and maths. Again the third Chaturmasya was held in Krishna District in the same place as before. In the year 1955, the 29th Sanatana Sabha was conducted under the presidentship of Vidyaprakasananada. Since then, for all the Sanatana Sabhas, he was presiding. In 1955 Vidyananda conducted Chaturmasya Vrata at Tadepalli Veda-Ashram as Swami wanted it to be conducted at the request of devotees. Thus many of his followers were given training in conducting spiritual discourses. Swami himself wrote: "As the sun rises, the darkness is dispelled. Spiritual sun is rising. The dark shadows of ignorance will not be seen any more. My sons! Stand up! be chivalrous and do not hesitate to walk on this path".

Starting of Kanyagurukula

"Half the population are women. Until and unless they are educated and emancipated our cultural revival would not be brou-ght". This was the strong opinion of Swami. "If good citizens are to be brought-up, good mothers are needed, for which Sanskrit study along with English is essential", he said. So a school for girls was started by Swami in the year 1954 on 10th June. Many ladies amply donated for this Kanyagurukula. [illegible] of Stri Sadhu Math, Rajahmundry laid foundation

stone. Buildings were constructed in no time and were opened on 1-12-1955. Swami, that being rainy season, did not invite many devotees to attend the opening function. But many thousands came. "The words of a Yogi never go in vain. When Vemana jokingly said that there would be diamonds in a pumpkin when it was cut, there were real diamonds. We are having heavy rain, though till now there was drought," said Swami at the opening function. Every one was afraid that the down-pour which started before the function, would spoil it. At 11.30 P. M in the night, miraculously the heavy downpour stopped. At noon, as the function was over, once again it rained and rained for many a day. Even railway tracks were washed away during that time.

For the house-warming of the Kanyagurukula buildings the young Sanyasins of the Math, Janabai, Daya Bai and Geeta Bai were made to enter it with photos of Sri Sarada Matha, Kasturiba Gandhi and Dayananda. Why only the photos of these great people were carried nobody understood. Swami ex-plained: "Dayananda fought for women's education and their rights for Vedic studies. Our students also should follow in his footsteps. Like Sri Sarada Matha some of these students should be ideal house-holders. Others may marry and lead a house-holder's life and then give up their lives for service of the society as Gandhi and Kasturiba. With this aim, these three photos have been given to these Bala Sanyasins".

Though started with eleven girls, today this Kanyagurukula provides for hundreds of girls. Of all Swami's services this wonderful institution is the best. By now Swami was seventy-one years old, but still he was as enthusiastic and energetic as a youth. If any one questions about his age he would joke and say "I am only seventeen. This is the reason for my energy."

Achievement

Swami's high aims in starting the Ashram were fulfilled. Thousands of women and other than brahmins came into his fold, and started treading on the spiritual path. Many Sadhus came into existence due to his encouragement. Some even started

Ashrams of their own. The monthly, Yadartha Bharati and all publications were sold in thousands in the nook and corners of Telugu country. He would often tell his devotees, "For whatever work the Lord has sent me that has been achieved".

One Pedeparti Venkata Ramashastri commented thus, "This is about two decades ago. I heard so much criticism against him. So, I wanted to see and hear what he would say. But to my surprise the very moment I heard him I was attracted. I had the fortune to sit by his side. The way he sat, the sweet and firm voice with which he expounded Githa, was astounding. There was no need to say I was completely changed and won over".

Swamiji's Last Days

In 1956, the 30th Sanatana Vedanta Sabha was conducted in West Godavary District, after which Swami went on tour to many places and returned back to the Ashram. 1957 was the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda. Swami sent his message to Vijayawada citizens on their request: "Swami Vivekananda's messages came from his very soul. That is why they have gained universality. There is no need to comment on his discourses. 'Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached' was his clarion call. This is enough for us to discharge our duty".

In 1957, Neredumalli village in Nalgonda District had the fortune of conducting the 31st Sanatana Sabha. Swami toured in Krishna, Nellore, Chittoor districts and returned back to the Ashram. As Rayalaseema was lagging behind in the conducting of these spiritual meetings, here after, Swami said, he decided to go only there.

In 1958, the 32nd Sabha was conducted at Peddavadugur in Anantapur District. Many hundreds have takan 'Mantra Deeksha' from Swami. Though Swami was not so well, according to the wishes of his devotees, the fourth Chaturmasya Vrata was conducted on the banks of Godavary in the year 1958. After it was finished Swami went on tour to Veeraghattam, Srikakulam District for the 33rd Sanatana Sabha. Swami Pranavananda, whose previous name was Kalupuri Venkatanarayana, with

the help of one Bhogi Venkata Ramayya, conducted these meetings, When Venkata Ramayya was in a mood of meloncholy, Srikakulam being a backward district, he was afraid that donations may not come for Swami's meetings. He fell asleep. Swami appeared in his dream and asked him not to worry.

Since 1960 Swami was suffering from severe diabetes, though it was there since 1943. Swami underwent eye-operation at Tenali in the year 1952, but he had to undergo other operations in 1960.

The Ashram activities had increased by leaps and bounds, Many other branches had also come into existence. Naturally the devotees grew agitated at Swami's illness. They, several times, asked Swami : "Swami ! What is next after you, who is your successor ?" But Swami said, "If one Governor is transferred from one state to another, is he worried about his successor ? God who brought me here shall take care of that too ! Some one shall certainly take care of these buildings, schools etc. or the Government shall take over. But now and then I wonder who is going to bear the torch of enlightenment which we gained after so much of meditation !"

One devotee said, "Swami, you have done everything for the Ashram, what about electrifying the buildings?". Swami laughed, "If every thing is done by us what is left for our successor! so! left if for him". But no one understood the inner meaning of it that Swami is going to leave his physical body soon.

The Last Meeting at Secunderabad

The 34th Sanatana Sabha was held during March, 13, 14 and 15 at Secunderabad. Before starting for the meeting Swami was having trouble with his knee. It was swollen and plenty of water and pus collected in the knee cap and Swami had 103° temperature. Just before the meeting started he talked for a few minutes and took rest. The remaining two days meetings were conducted by Vidyaprakasananda Swami.

Doctors advised rest for Swami. Though Swami was disuaded by Brahmachari Gopal and others not to talk on the last day

of the meeting, he insisted on attending the meeting and was taken to the dias. He gave his usual discourse. After this, he was admitted into Gandhi Hospital where he was operated. Swami, as we are aware, used to sleep only on a hard bench. Bed-sores started. After much persuasion by the devotees and an American sister he agreed to have a cotton mattress. Inspite of the operation he was unable to walk, so with a hand stick he managed.

Swami was taken to Vellore for further treatment. After the treatment was over he came back to the Ashram on 15th July 1960. Even in this stage of health Swami dictated a book to his students named "The Last Rites", as if he was preparing them for the final departure.

One day Swami in his discourse said: "See God's grace. He sent a Sanyasi into this forest. and what change has been brought you are aware". Another time seeing a tree in the Ashram near the Kasibugga he said, "This place is sacred. In olden days many sages have meditated here. This is the reason why we are able to develop the Ashram in a few years".

Chinmayananda paid a visit to the Ashram in January, 1951 as he heard so much about Malayalaswami. Swami was overjoyed. Welcoming him said, "Chinmayananda, like Swami Vivekananda, you are giving discourses to many an educated men in India and abroad". Since then he visited Swamiji several times. When he saw Swamiji on his way from Vellore at Dwarakanatha Reddi's home, Swamiji declared to Chinmayanandaji: "Our time has neared. Hereafter you are to serve these devotees".

By 1961 Swami's ear started giving trouble. It was suspected as cancer of the ear. Great Rishis like Ramana, and Sri Ramakrishna also suffered with this horrible killing cancer. He was joined in Vellore hospital. Once again, devotees served him round the clock.

Paheetapur Meeting

Ladies named Muppala Venkatamma, Varalakshmi Devi, Paladugu Vasumathi Devi, Musunur Sarojini have invited Swami for

the thirtyfifth Sanatana Sabha. Swami's aspiration of ladies organising and conducting the Sanatana Sabha was realised. His health was deteriorating. Doctors advised him not to travel but he was adament. "I promised them that I shall go. If Sadhu's themselves go back on their word who else do you expect to keep their promises ?".

From Vellore he came to the Ashram, but due to weakness and travel, he swooned. Immediately Doctor was called from Srikalahasti and he advised to stop Swami from going. The organisers also prayed him to stop coming. Swami said "Even if I die I have to keep my word." So all the devotees started for the meeting. The meetings on March, 2nd, 3rd and 4th were conducted. He was able to say just a few words in the beginning of the meeting. Every one was struck with sorrow at the pitiable indisposition of Swami, who used to lecture for months together during Chaturmasya and Gyana Yagnas.

Hospitalisation

After the meetings Swami started for the Ashram, but the next day itself, as his condition became worse, he was forced to start once again for Vellore. As and when the devotees came, even in the hospital,Swami was advising them on spiritual matters.

Days were passing. Money was being spent, which Swami did not like. So he wanted to return back to the Ashram saying the wastefulness of Ashram money even for his sake was not good. Many devotees on hearing this sent money orders specially for his treatment and medicines. Swami wanted an account of this to be kept seperately and no money of the Ashram to be touched.

Whenever his devotees came to see him he would say : "The signs of old age have invaded — like loss of sight, hearing etc. But these have no effect on my mind. They are effecting only this physical body". Even when Doctors questioned him, about his sleeplessness he would cheerfully answer, "No ! I have no suffering what so ever. Even if there is no eye sight or hearing, all my children are taking care of the Ashram duties and my personal comforts".

Swami returned to the Ashram on 7th July. All these years Swami was living in a hut. Rajayya and Krishnacharanam prayed Swami to give permission to construct a small room for his stay. After much persuasion and on agreeing not to spend much money on it, he agreed. But he did not stay in this room for more than ten months.

The women devotees in the Ashram arranged for a wheel chair for Swami to go around the Ashram, daily, sitting in it. Once he went to the Kanyagurukula and said, "Without the uplift of women the world would not advance. If great men like Swami Vivekananda were born it is due to the piety of their mothers. We have by God's grace started the hostel for girls, but now I want a separate high school for girls", So, a girls school was started.

In 1961, which Swami declared as his last book, was published, "Beware of Danger". Even afterwards he was able to dictate a few more essays.

Remembrance of Previous Birth, Declaration About Future Birth

When the year 1962 started, Swami was still going about the Ashram on the wheel chair. On 19th January in the evening discourse Swami declared: "We were born hundred miles West of Vijayawada. That is the reason why we have so many devotees in both Krishna and Godavary Districts, though our Ashram is in Rayalaseema. After two hundred years we are once again going to take a re-birth two hundred miles West of Delhi. Many of these devotees were with me in previous births also. For you, two hundred years is a long period, but for spiritual beings it passes in no time". These words may be compared to what Swami was time and again saying during his Chaturmasya Vrata's end. Swami would ask the devotees to pray so that all the devotees and Swami shall be born again and again.

During Gurupuja days in Magha, nearly two thousand devotees attended. Swami wished even those whom he saw only once with their names. That this would be the last time for their

Gurupuja no one realised. On men's Gurupuja day the author of this biography in Telugu, submitted to Swami, his book named "Sri Malayala Sadguru Satakam". Every one heard it with rapture and Swami said "All our wishes are fulfilled. There is none left. We have no wish to live or die. What ever is His wish let it happened".

Shadnagar Meeting

The 36th Sanatana Sabha's preparations were made at Shadnagar in 1962 on March 21st, 22nd and 23rd. Including Dr. V. Ramachari feared whether Swami could withstand the journey. Though his health was deteriorating day by day, Swami insisted on attending it. On 21st Swami spoke on "The need of Japa and Dyana by Devotees".

On 22nd, the Second day of the meeting, is ladies, day. Swami expounded, "The place of womanhood in Indian culture is very unique. For, great Kings, Prophets and Saints were born to great mothers, so it goes without saying that the status of our women should be raised". Though his health was deteriorating Swami insisted on going to Gagillapuram in Karimnagar District to Sri Paramatmananda Ashram which he established in 1940. This was his last tour.

He returned to the Ashram on third of April 1962. His last message to the world was this :

"There are plenty of service organisations like schools and hospitals and ashrams. Every institution says they are unable to develop it due to lack of funds, which is not correct. If there are sincere workers money and helpers would automatically come either from this country or from foreign countries.

Some of his axioms are :

1. Without good Gurus spiritual advancement is not possible.
2. If there are no good teachers education will not improve.

3. *If there are no good doctors hospitals will not prosper.*

4. *If there are no good cultivators agriculture will not prosper.*

5. *If cattle are not properly taken care of they will never thrive.*

6. *If there are no good rulers no country will advance.*

7. *If there are no good cooks and managers no hotel will prosper.*

8. *Unless there are good poets and writers in a country, education will not be spread.*

So it is true about all institutions.

Again Swami was taken to Vellore. He realised that this would be his last stay at the hospital. Only one other important work remained for him i. e. to nominate his successor to the Ashram.

Since his childhood Sri Krishna Charanam studied in the Ashram, then went to Benares for further studies and stayed there for twenty years. His discipline, conduct and especially his love and respect for Swami were commendable. Swami decided to nominate Sri Krishna Charanam as his successor and he wrote a will to this effect on 24th April 1962. Every one felt happy at this decision of Swami.

Swami, many a time, insisted to go back to the Ashram. So he was brought back on 4th June. By this time Swami's life size statue from Benares also arrived. He sent Sri Krishna Charanam back to Benares asking him not to neglect his studies. He never even told him that he had been nominated as his successor. Even at this stage Swami sent an essay to July monthly with the title "Aloneness".

Maha Samadhi

Just a week, before Swami, who all these years was sleeping with his head towards South now changed to the North side. He asked his devotees when Ekadasi was due. No body understood the underlying meaning of this. Sadhu Mata of Rajahmundry came with her devotees. On July 11th Doctor came from Sri Kalahasti and examined him. Even at this time Swami sat and took his diet.

Subhakrutnama Year, Ashada Month and full moon days and it was *Shayana Ekadasi, Thursday*. It is a pious day by itself. According to our Calender it was 1962 July 12th. Padapuja of Swami was conducted, Go-dana, Bhu-dana were also given. And Swami took even Biksha, but none suspected that this was his last acceptance.

By ten in the night Swami's condition became serious. He asked, "Have you finished all the Pujas and given Arti". Rajayya replied "Swami, it is already ten in the night". "Then it is alright, every thing is finished". Then Swami said "Finish to this material and physical world,"

At 11'o clock they thought Swami was uttering something. So Rajayya went near him and asked "Swami ! shall I give you little milk." "Yes" was his reply. After sipping a little of the milk, he turned to the left keeping the right ear open to air and he slept. What Rajayya gave him was the last sustinence he received from his devotee.

It was 22nd midnight. Nature was at rest. No sound of either man or beast was heard. The heart which made a sound for seventy eight years also wanted to be at peace with nature. The light inside has immersed itself in the eternal light.

The sun, who dispelled the meta-physical darkness had set. The practical Vedantin who without desire, incessantly worked for dispelling spiritual discord was no more.

This sad news spread like fire. Devotees cried like small kids who lost their parents. Telegrams were sent to all devotees who were far away. All India Radio announced the demise of Swamiji.

Receiving the telegram Sri Krishna Charanam started from Benares by plane. Swamiji's body was kept for two days i.e. till 14th, covered with flowers for the last glimpse for several devotees. Swami long back expressed his wish that his body was to be buried in Nishtashrama. On 14th evening his body, bathed with Ganga water and decorated with garlands, was taken round the Ashram with Bhajans and was buried in the Nishtashrama after the usual performance of Puja and recitations of mantras.

His successor Sri Krishna Charanam became Vimalananda-Swami. It was decided to build a memorial hall and instal Swami's statue. The Mandalaradhna i.e. 40th day of obesquies was performed on 20th August 1962. Thousands of devotees attended and paid their last homage to Swami.

On this occasion the President of India, Sri Sarvepalli Radhakrishna and other political leaders and Sadhu Mahatmas sent their condolences. Swami Sivananda proclaimed that Swami's life was a commentary (or Bhasyam) on Bhagavath Gita. Sri Satya Sai Baba declared that Swami stood by the masses and enriched their life with so much of happiness by his selfless work. He gained eternal name and fame in the Theistic world.

The foundation was laid for his Adhistan Mandir (Memorial Hall). Swami used to say that all his institutions would survive for six hundred years.

Sri Vimalananda Swami, with determination started collection for Adhistan Mandir. Six lakhs were collected. On 26th January 1972, i.e. according to Telugu Almanac, Virodhinama year, Magha masa, Wednesday, Ekadasi, his statue was installed in the big hall that was constructed. Nearly thirty-thousand devotees attended. The function was celebrated in a very grand manner.

Swami's Adhistan Mandir has now became a pilgrim centre for all.

"If possible help others but never come in their way of spiritual progress. If there are hurdles in your spiritual path remove them. A heart-full of love is the abode of God."

With this advice from Swami, let all the mankind try to be happy.
